



La Grange



P O E M S

OF

O S S I A N,

THE

SON OF FINGAL.

VOL. II.

THE
P O E M S
OF
O S S I A N,
THE
SON OF FINGAL.

TRANSLATED
By JAMES MACPHERSON, Esq.


A NEW EDITION.

CAREFULLY CORRECTED, AND GREATLY IMPROVED.



VOL. II.

WE MAY BOLDLY ASSIGN OSSIAN A PLACE AMONG THOSE
WHOSE WORKS ARE TO LAST FOR AGES. BLAIR.



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TEMORA:

AN

EPIC POEM.

IN EIGHT BOOKS.

THE ARGUMENT.

Cairbar, the son of Borbar-duthul, lord of Atha in Connaught, the most potent chief of the race of the Firbolg, having murdered at Temora the royal palace, Cormac the son of Artho, the young king of Ireland, usurped the throne. Cormac was lineally descended from Conar the son of Trenmor, the great-grandfather of Fingal, king of those Caledonians who inhabited the western coast of Scotland. Fingal resented the behaviour of Cairbar, and resolved to pass over into Ireland, with an army, to re-establish the royal family on the Irish throne. Early intelligence of his designs coming to Cairbar, he assembled some of his tribes in Ulster, and at the same time ordered his brother Cathmor to follow him speedily with an army, from Temora. Such was the situation of affairs when the Caledonian fleet appeared on the coast of Ulster.

The poem opens in the morning. Cairbar is represented as retired from the rest of the army, when one of his scouts brought him news of the landing of Fingal. He assembles a council of his chiefs. Foldath the chief of Moma haughtily despises the enemy; and is reprimanded warmly by Malchos. Cairbar, after hearing their debate, orders a feast to be prepared, to which, by his bard Olla, he invites Oscar the son of Ossian; resolving to pick a quarrel with that hero, and so have some pretext for killing him. Oscar came to the feast; the quarrel happened; the followers of both fought, and Cairbar and Oscar fell by mutual wounds. The noise of the battle reached Fingal's army. The king came on, to the relief of Oscar, and the Irish fell back to the army of Cathmor, who was advanced to the banks of the river Lubar, on the heath of Moi-lena. Fingal after mourning over his grandson, ordered Ullin the chief of his bards to carry his body to Morven, to be there interred. Night coming on, Althan, the son of Conachar, relates to the king the particulars of the murder of Cormac. Fillan, the son of Fingal, is sent to observe the motions of Cathmor by night, which concludes the action of the first day. The scene of this book is a plain, near the hill of Mora, which rose on the borders of the heath of Moi-lena, in Ulster.

BOOK I.

THE blue waves of Ullin roll in light. The
green hills are covered with day. Trees shake
A 3 their

their dusky heads in the breeze. Gray torrents pour their noisy streams. Two green hills, with aged oaks, surround a narrow plain. The blue course of a stream is there; on its banks stood Cairbar* of Atha. His spear supports the king: the red eyes of his fear are sad. Cormac rises in his soul, with all his ghastly wounds. The gray form of the youth appears in darkness; blood pours from his airy sides. Cairbar thrice threw his spear on earth; and thrice he stroked his beard. His steps are short; he often stops: and tosses his sinewy arms. He is like a cloud in the desert, that varies its form to every blast: the valleys are sad around, and fear, by turns, the shower.

The king, at length, resumed his soul, and took his pointed spear. He turned his eyes to Moilena. The scouts of blue ocean came. They came with steps of fear, and often looked behind. Cairbar knew that the mighty were near, and called his gloomy chiefs.

The sounding steps of his warriors came. They drew, at once, their swords. There Morlath† stood with

* Cairbar, the son of Borbar-duthul, was descended lineally from Lathon the chief of the Firbolg, the first colony who settled in the south of Ireland. The Cael were in possession of the northern coast of that kingdom, and the first monarchs of Ireland were of their race. Hence arose those differences between the two nations, which terminated, at last, in the murder of Cormac, and the usurpation of Cairbar, lord of Atha, who is mentioned in this place.

† Mor-lath, *great in the day of battle*. Hidalla', *mildly looking hero*. Cor-mar, *expert at sea*. Malthos, *slow to speak*. Foldath, *generous*.

Foldath, who is here strongly marked, makes a great figure in the sequel of the poem. His fierce, uncomplying character is sustained throughout. He seems, from a passage in the second book, to have been Cairbar's greatest confident, and to have had a principal hand in the conspiracy against Cormac king of Ireland. His tribe was one of the most considerable of the race of the Firbolg.

with darkened face. Hidalla's long hair sighs in wind. Red-haired Cormar bends on his spear, and rolls his side-long-looking eyes. Wild is the look of Malthos from beneath two shaggy brows. Foldath stands like an oozy rock, that covers its dark sides with foam. His spear is like Slimora's fir, that meets the wind of heaven. His shield is marked with the strokes of battle; and his red eye despises danger. These and a thousand other chiefs surrounded car-borne Cairbar, when the scout of ocean came. Mor-annal, from streamy Moi-lena. His eyes hang forward from his face, his lips are trembling, pale.

"Do the chiefs of Erin stand," he said, "silent as the grove of evening? Stand they, like a silent wood, and Fingal on the coast? Fingal, the terrible in battle, the king of streamy Morven." "Hast thou seen the warrior?" said Cairbar with a sigh. "Are his heroes many on the coast? Lifts he the spear of battle? Or comes the king in peace?" "In peace he comes not, Cairbar. I have seen his forward spear*. It is a meteor of death; the blood of thousands is on his steel. He came first to the shore, strong in the gray hair of age. Full rose his sinewy limbs, as he rose in his might. That sword is by his side which gives no second† wound. His shield is terrible,

* Mor-annal here alludes to the particular appearance of Fingal's spear. If a man, upon his first landing in a strange country, kept the point of his spear forward, it denoted in those days that he came in a hostile manner, and accordingly he was treated as an enemy; if he kept the point behind him, it was a token of friendship, and he was immediately invited to the feast, according to the hospitality of the times.

† This was the famous sword of Fingal, made by Luno, a smith of Lochlin, and after him poetically called the *son of Luno*: it is said of this sword, that it killed a man at every stroke; and that Fingal never used it but in times of the greatest danger.

terrible, like the bloody moon ascending through a storm. Then came Ossian king of songs; and Morni's son, the first of men. Connal leaps forward on his spear: Dermot spreads his dark-brown locks. Fillan bends his bow, the young hunter of streamy Moruth. But who is that before them, like the dreadful course of a stream? It is the son of Ossian, bright between his locks. His long hair falls on his back. His dark brows are half-inclosed in steel. His sword hangs loose on his side. His spear glitters as he moves. I fled from his terrible eyes, king of high Temora."

"Then fly, thou feeble man," said Foldath in gloomy wrath. "Fly to the gray streams of thy land, son of the little soul! Have not I seen that Oscar? I beheld the chief in war. He is of the mighty in danger; but there are others who lift the spear. Erin has many sons as brave, king of Temora of Groves! Let Foldath meet him in the strength of his course, and stop this mighty stream. My spear is covered with the blood of the valiant; my shield is like the wall of Tura."

"Shall Foldath* alone meet the foe?" replied the dark-browed Malthos. "Are they not numerous on our coast, like the waters of many streams? Are not these the chiefs who vanquished Swaran, when the sons of Erin fled? And shall Foldath meet their bravest heroes? Foldath of the heart of pride! take the strength of the people; and let Malthos come. My sword is red with slaughter, but who has heard my words? †"

"Sons

* The opposite characters of Foldath and Malthos are strongly marked in subsequent parts of the poem. They appear always in opposition. The feuds between their families, which were the source of their hatred to one another, are mentioned in other poems.

† That is, who has heard my vaunting? He intended the expression as a rebuke to the self-praise of Foldath.

“ Sons of green Erin,” said Hidalla *, “ let not Fingal hear your words. The foe might rejoice, and his arm be strong in the land. Ye are brave, O warriors, and like the storms of the desert ; they meet the rocks without fear, and overturn the woods. But let us move in our strength, slow as a gathered cloud. Then shall the mighty tremble ; the spear shall fall from the hand of the valiant. We see the cloud of death, they will say, while shadows fly over their face. Fingal will mourn in his age, and see his flying fame. The steps of his chiefs will cease in Morven : the moss of years shall grow in Selma.”

Cairbar heard their words, in silence, like the cloud of a shower : it stands dark on Cromla, till the lightning bursts its sides : the valley gleams with red light ; the spirits of the storm rejoice. So stood the silent king of Temora ; at length his words are heard.

“ Spread the feast on Moi-lena : let my hundred bards attend. Thou, red-haired Olla, take the harp of the king. Go to Oscar chief of swords, and bid him to our feast. To-day we feast and hear the song ; to-morrow break the spears. Tell him that I have raised the tomb of Cathol † ; that bards have sung to his ghost. Tell him that Cairbar has heard
his

* Hidalla was the chief of Clonra, a small district on the banks of the lake of Lego. The beauty of his person, his eloquence, and genius for poetry, are afterwards mentioned.

† Cathol the son of Maronnan, or Moran, was murdered by Cairbar, for his attachment to the family of Cormac. He had attended Oscar to the *war of Inis-ibona*, where they contracted a great friendship for one another. Oscar immediately after the death of Cathol, had sent a formal challenge to Cairbar, which he prudently declined, but conceived a secret hatred against Oscar, and had beforehand contrived to kill him at the feast, to which he here invites him.

his fame at the stream of resounding C'arun *. Cathmor † is not here, Borbar-duthul's generous race. He is not here with his thousands, and our arms are weak. Cathmor is a foe to strife at the feast: his soul is bright as that sun. But Cairbar shall fight with Oscar, chiefs of the woody Temora! His words for Cathol were many; the wrath of Cairbar burns. He shall fall on Moi-lena: my fame shall rise in blood."

Their faces brightened round with joy. They spread over Moi-lena. The feast of shells is prepared. The songs of bards arise. We heard ‡ the voice

* He alludes to the battle of Oscar against Caros, *king of ships*; who is supposed to be the same with Carausius the usurper.

† Cathmor, *great in battle*, the son of Borbar-duthul, and brother of Cairbar king of Ireland, had, before the insurrection of the Firbolg, passed over into Inis-huna, supposed to be a part of South-Britain, to assist Connor king of that place against his enemies. Cathmor was successful in the war, but, in the course of it, Connor was either killed, or died a natural death. Cairbar, upon intelligence of the designs of Fingal to dethrone him, had dispatched a messenger for Cathmor, who returned into Ireland a few days before the opening of the poem.

Cairbar here takes advantage of his brother's absence, to perpetrate his ungenerous designs against Oscar; for the noble spirit of Cathmor, had he been present, would not have permitted the laws of that hospitality, for which he was so renowned himself to be violated. The brothers form a contrast; we do not detest the mean soul of Cairbar more, than we admire the disinterested and generous mind of Cathmor.

‡ Fingal's army heard the joy that was in Cairbar's camp. The character given of Cathmor is agreeable to the times. Some, through ostentation, were hospitable; and others fell naturally into a custom handed down from their ancestors. But what marks strongly the character of Cathmor,

voice of joy on the coast: we thought that mighty Cathmor came. Cathmor the friend of strangers! the brother of red-haired Cairbar. Their souls were not the same. The light of heaven was in the bosom of Cathmor. His towers rose on the banks of Atha: seven paths led to his halls. Seven chiefs stood on the paths, and called the stranger to the feast! But Cathmor dwelt in the wood to avoid the voice of praise.

Olla came with his songs. Oscar went to Cairbar's feast. Three hundred warriors strode along Moi-lena of the streams. The gray dogs bounded on the heath, their howling reached afar. Fingal saw the departing hero: the soul of the king was sad. He dreaded Cairbar's gloomy thoughts, amidst the feast
of

mor, is his aversion to praise; for he is represented to dwell in a wood to avoid the thanks of his guests; which is still a higher degree of generosity than that of Axylus in Homer; for the poet does not say, but the good man might, at the head of his own table, have heard with pleasure the praise bestowed on him by the people he entertained.

No nation in the world carried hospitality to a greater length than the ancient Scots. It was even infamous, for many ages, in a man of condition, to have the door of his house shut at all, *left*, as the bards express it, *the stranger should come and behold his contracted soul*. Some of the chiefs were possessed of this hospitable disposition to an extravagant degree; and the bards, perhaps upon a selfish account, never failed to recommend it, in their eulogiums. *Cean-ua' na dai'*, or *the point to which all the roads of the strangers lead*, was an invariable epithet given by them to the chiefs; on the contrary, they distinguished the inhospitable by the title of *the cloud which the strangers shun*. This last however was so uncommon, that in all the old poems I have ever met with, I found but one man branded with this ignominious appellation; and that, perhaps, only founded upon a private quarrel, which subsisted between him and the patron of the bard, who wrote the poem.

of shells. My son raised high the spear of Cormac: an hundred bards met him with songs. Cairbar concealed with smiles the death that was dark in his soul. The feast is spread, the shells resound: joy brightens the face of the host. But it was like the parting beam of the sun, when he is to hide his red head in a storm.

Cairbar rose in his arms; darkness gathered on his brow. The hundred harps ceased at once. The clang* of shields was heard. Far distant on the heath Olla raised his song of woe. My son knew the sign of death; and rising seized his spear. "Oscar!" said the dark-red Cairbar, I behold the spear† of Innis-fail. The spear of Temora‡ glitters in thy hand, son of woody Morven! It was the pride of an hundred|| kings, the death of heroes of old. Yield it, son of Ossian, yield it to car-borne Cairbar."

" Shall

* When a chief was determined to kill a person already in his power, it was usual to signify that his death was intended, by the sound of a shield struck with the blunt end of a spear; at the same time that a bard at a distance raised the *death-song*. A ceremony of another kind was long used in Scotland upon such occasions. Every body has heard that a bull's head was served up to Lord Douglas in the castle of Edinburgh, as a certain signal of his approaching death.

† Cormac, the son of Arth, had given the spear, which is here the foundation of the quarrel, to Oscar when he came to congratulate him, upon Swaran's being expelled from Ireland.

‡ *Ti-mor-rath*, the house of good fortune, the name of the royal palace of the supreme kings of Ireland.

|| *Hundred* here is an indefinite number, and is only intended to express a great many. It was probably the hyperbolical phrases of bards, that gave the first hint to the Irish Senachies to place the origin of their monarchy in so remote a period as they have done.

“ Shall I yield,” Oscar replied, “ the gift of Erin’s injured king : the gift of fair-haired Cormac, when Oscar scattered his foes ! I came to Cormac’s halls of joy, when Swaran fled from Fingal. Gladness rose in the face of youth : he gave the spear of Temora. Nor did he give it to the feeble, O Cairbar, neither to the weak in soul. The darkness of thy face is no storm to me ; nor are thine eyes the flames of death. Do I fear thy clanging shield ? Tremble I at Olla’s song ? No : Cairbar, frighten the feeble ; Oscar is a rock.”

“ And wilt thou not yield the spear ?” replied the rising pride of Cairbar. “ Are thy words so mighty because Fingal is near ? Fingal with aged locks from Morven’s hundred groves ! He has fought with little men. But he must vanish before Cairbar, like a thin pillar of mist before the winds of Atha *” “ Were he who fought with little men near Atha’s darkening chief : Atha’s darkening chief would yield green Erin his rage. Speak not of the mighty, O Cairbar ! but turn thy sword on me. Our strength is equal ; but Fingal is renowned ! the first of mortal men !”

Their people saw the darkening chiefs. Their crowding steps are heard around. Their eyes roll in fire. A thousand swords are half unsheathed. Red-haired Olla raised the song of battle : the trembling joy of Oscar’s soul arose : the wonted joy of his soul when Fingal’s horn was heard. Dark as the swelling wave of ocean before the rising winds, when it bends its head near a coast, came on the host of Cairbar.

Daughter of Toscar † ! why that tear ? He is not fallen yet. Many were the deaths of his arm before my hero fell !

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B

Behold

* Atha, *shallow river* : the name of Cairbar’s feat in Connaught.

† Malvina, the daughter of Toscar, to whom he addresses that part of the poem which relates to the death of Oscar her lover.

Behold they fall before my son like the groves in the desert, when an angry ghost rushes through night, and takes their green heads in his hand! Morlath falls: Maronnan dies: Conachar trembles in his blood. Cairbar shrinks before Oscar's sword; and creeps in darkness behind his stone. He lifted the spear in secret, and pierced my Oscar's side. He falls forward on his shield: his knee sustains the chief. But still his spear is in his hand. See gloomy Cairbar* falls! The steel pierced his forehead, and divided

* The Irish historians place the death of Cairbar, in the latter end of the third century: they say, he was killed in battle against Oscar the son of Ossian, but deny that he fell by his hand.

It is, however, certain, that the Irish historians disguise, in some measure, this part of their history. An Irish poem on this subject, which, undoubtedly was the source of their information, concerning the battle of Gabhra, where Cairbar fell, is just now in my hands. The circumstances are less to the disadvantage of the character of Cairbar, than those related by Ossian. As a translation of the poem (which, tho' evidently no very ancient composition, does not want poetical merit) would extend this note to too great a length, I shall only give the story of it, in brief, with some extracts from the original Irish.

Oscar, says the Irish bard, was invited to a feast, at Temora, by Cairbar king of Ireland. A dispute arose between the two heroes, concerning the exchange of spears, which was usually made, between the guests and their host, upon such occasions. In the course of their altercation, Cairbar said, in a boastful manner, that he would hunt on the hills of Albion, and carry the spoils of it into Ireland, in spite of all the efforts of its inhabitants. The original words are:

Briathar buan sin; Briathar buan
A bhéireadh an Cairbre rua',
Gu tuga' se sealg, agus creach
A h'ALBIN an la'r na inhaireach.

Oscar

vided his red hair behind. He lay like a shattered rock, which Cromla shakes from its shaggy side. But never more shall Oscar rise ! he leans on his bossy shield. His spear is in his terrible hand : Erin's sons stood distant and dark. Their shouts arose, like crowded streams ; Moi-lena echoed wide.

Fingal heard the sound ; and took his father's spear. His steps are before us on the heath. He spoke the words of woe." " I hear the noise of war. Young Oscar is alone. Rise, sons of Morven ; join the hero's sword."

Ossian rushed along the heath. Fillan bounded over Moi-lena. Fingal strode in his strength, and the light of his shield is terrible. The sons of Erin saw it far distant ; they trembled in their souls. They knew that the wrath of the king arose : and they foresaw their death. We first arrived ; we fought ; and Erin's chiefs withstood our rage. But when the king came, in the sound of his course, what heart of steel could stand ! Erin fled over Moi-lena. Death

B 2

pursued

Oscar replied, that, the next day, he himself would carry into Albion the spoils of the five provinces of Ireland ; in spite of the opposition of Cairbar.

Briathar eile an aghai' sin

A bheirea' an t'Oscar, og, calma

Gu'n tugadh se fealg argus creach

Do dh'ALBIN an la'r na mhaireach, &c.

Oscar, in consequence of his threats, begun to lay waste Ireland ; but as he returned with the the spoil into Ulster. Through the narrow pass of Gabhra (*Caoil-gblen-Ghabhra*) he was met, by Cairbar, and a battle ensued, in which both the heroes fell by mutual wounds. The bard gives a very curious list of the followers of Oscar, as they marched to battle. They appear to have been five hundred in number, commanded, as the poet expresses it, by *five heroes of the blood of kings*. This poem mentions Fingal, as arriving from Scotland, before Oscar died of his wounds.

perſued their flight. We ſaw Oſcar on his ſhield. We ſaw his blood around. Silence darkened every face. Each turned his back and wept. The king ſtrove to hide his tears. His gray beard whiſtled in the wind. He bent his head above his ſon. His words were mixed with ſighs.

“ And art thou fallen, Oſcar, in the miſt of thy courſe? the heart of the aged beats over thee! He ſees thy coming wars. The wars which ought to come he ſees, but they are cut off from thy fame. When ſhall joy dwell at Selma? When ſhall grief depart from Morven? My ſons fall by degrees: Fingal ſhall be the laſt of his race. The fame which I have received ſhall paſs away: my age will be without friends. I ſhall ſit a gray cloud in my hall: nor ſhall I hear the return of a ſon, in the miſt of his ſounding arms. Weep, ye heroes of Morven! never more ſhall Oſcar riſe!”

And they did weep, O Fingal; dear was the hero to their ſouls. He went out to battle, and the foes vaniſhed; he returned, in peace, amidſt their joy. No father mourned his ſon ſlain in youth; no brother his brother of love. They fell, without tears, for the chief of the people was low! Bran* is howling at his feet: gloomy Luäth is ſad, for he had often led them to the chace; to the bounding roe of the deſart.

When Oſcar ſaw his friends around, his breſt aroſe with ſighs. “ The groans,” he ſaid, “ of aged chiefs; the howling of my dogs: the ſudden burſts of ſongs of grief, have melted Oſcar’s ſoul. My ſoul, that never melted before; it was like the ſteel of my ſword. Oſſian, carry me to my hills! Raiſe the ſtones of my renown. Place the horn of the deer, and my ſword within my narrow dwelling.
The

* Bran was one of Fingal’s dogs. Bran ſignifies a mountain-ſtream.

The torrent hereafter may raise the earth : the hunter may find the steel and say, " This has been Oscar's sword."

" And fallest thou, son of my fame ! And shall I never see thee, Oscar ! When others hear of their sons, I shall not hear of thee. The moss is on thy four gray stones ; the mournful wind is there. The battle shall be fought without him : he shall not pursue the dark-brown hinds. When the warrior returns from battles, and tells of other lands ; I have seen a tomb, he will say, by the roaring stream, the dark dwelling of a chief. He fell by car-borne Oscar, the first of mortal men. I, perhaps, shall hear his voice ; and a beam of joy will rise in my soul."

The night would have descended in sorrow, and morning returned in the shadow of grief : our chiefs would have stood like cold dropping rocks on Moilena, and have forgot the war, did not the king disperse his grief, and raise his mighty voice. The chiefs, as new-wakened from dreams, lift up their heads around. -

" How long on Moilena shall we weep ; or pour our tears in Ullin ? The mighty will not return. Oscar shall not rise in his strength. The valiant must fall one day, and be no more known on his hills. Where are our fathers, O warriors ! the chiefs of the times of old ? They have set like stars that have shone, we only hear the sound of their praise. But they were renowned in their day, the terror of other times. Thus shall we pass, O warriors, in the day of our fall. Then let us be renowned when we may ; and leave our fame behind us, like the last beams of the sun, when he hides his red head in the west. Ullin, my aged bard ! take the ship of the king. Carry Oscar to Selma of harps. Let the daughters of Morven weep. We shall fight in Erin for the race of fallen Cormac. The days of my years begin to fail : I feel the weakness of my arm.

My fathers bend from their clouds, to receive their gray-haired son. But, before I go hence, one beam of fame shall rise: so shall my days end, as my years begun, in fame: my life shall be one stream of light to bards of other times.

Ullin raised his white sails: the wind of the south came forth. He bounded on the waves towards Selma. I remained in my grief, but my words were not heard. The feast is spread on Moi-lena: an hundred heroes reared the tomb of Cairbar: but no song is raised over the chief: for his soul had been dark and bloody. The bards remembered the fall of Cormac! what could they say in Cairbar's praise?

The night came rolling down. The light of an hundred oaks arose. Fingal sat beneath a tree. Old Althan* stood in the midst. He told the tale of fallen Cormac. Althan the son of Conachar, the friend of car-borne Cuchullin: he dwelt with Cormac in windy Temora, when Semo's son fought with generous Torlath. The tale of Althan was mournful, and the tear was in his eye.

“The † setting sun was yellow on Dora‡. Gray evening began to descend. Temora's woods shook with the blast of the unconstant wind. A cloud, at length, gathered in the west, and a red star looked from behind its edge. I stood in the wood alone, and saw a ghost on the darkening air. His stride extended from hill to hill: his shield was dim on his side. It was the son of Semo: I knew the warrior's face.

* Althan, the son of Conachar, was the chief bard of Arth king of Ireland. After the death of Arth, Althan attended his son Cormac, and was present at his death. He had made his escape from Cairbar, by the means of Cathmor, and coming to Fingal, related, as here, the death of his master Cormac.

† Althan speaks.

‡ Doira, *the woody side of a mountain*; it is here a hill in the neighbourhood of Temora.

face. But he passed away in his blast; and all was dark around. My soul was sad. I went to the hall of shells. A thousand lights arose: the hundred bards had strung the harp. Cormac stood in the midst, like the morning star, when it rejoices on the eastern hill, and its young beams are bathed in showers. The sword of Artho* was in the hand of the king; and he looked with joy on its polished studs: thrice he strove to draw it, and thrice he failed; his yellow locks are spread on his shoulders: his cheeks of youth are red. I mourned over the beam of youth, for he was soon to set.

“Althan!” he said, with a smile, “hast thou beheld my father? Heavy is the sword of the king, surely his arm was strong. O that I were like him in battle, when the rage of his wrath arose! then would I have met, like Cuchullin, the car-borne son of Cantéla! But years may come on, O Althan! and my arm be strong. Hast thou heard of Semo’s son, the chief of high Temora? He might have returned with his fame; for he promised to return to-night. My bards wait him with songs; my feast is spread in Temora.”

“I heard the king in silence. My tears began to flow. I hid them with my aged locks; but he perceived my grief. “Son of Conachar!” he said, “is the king of Tura† low? Why bursts thy sigh in secret? And why descends the tear? Comes the car-borne Torlath? Or the sound of the red-haired Cairbar? They come! for I behold thy grief. Mossy Tura’s king is low! Shall I not rush to battle? But I cannot lift the spear! O had mine arm the strength of Cuchullin, soon would Cairbar fly; the

* Aíth or Artho, the father of Cormac king of Ireland.

† Cuchullin is called the king of Tura, from a castle of that name on the coast of Ulster, where he dwelt, before he undertook the management of the affairs of Ireland, in the minority of Cormac.

the fame of my fathers would be renewed; and the deeds of other times!"

"He took his bow. The tears flow down, from both his sparkling eyes. Grief saddens round: the bards bend forward, from their hundred harps. The lone blast touched their trembling strings. The sound* is sad and low. A voice is heard at a distance, as of one in grief? it was Carril of other times, who came from dark Slimora†. He told of the death of Cuchullin, and of his mighty deeds. The people were scattered round his tomb: their arms lay on the ground. They had forgot the war, for he, their fire, was seen no more.

"But who," said the soft-voiced Carril, "come like the bounding roes? their stature is like the young trees of the plain, growing in a shower: Soft and ruddy are their cheeks; but fearless souls look forth from their eyes? Who but the sons of Ufnoth‡, the

* The prophetic sound, mentioned in other poems, which the harps of the bards emitted before the death of a person worthy and renowned. It is here an omen of the death of Cormac, which, soon after, followed.

† Slimora, a hill in Connaught, near which Cuchullin was killed.

‡ Ufnoth chief of Etha, a district on the western coast of Scotland, had three sons, Nathos, Althos, and Ardan, by Sliffama the sister of Cuchullin. The three brothers, when very young, were sent over to Ireland by their father, to learn the use of arms under their uncle, whose military fame was very great in that kingdom. They had just arrived in Ulster when the news of Cuchullin's death arrived. Nathos, the eldest of the three brothers, took the command of Cuchullin's army, and made head against Cairbar the chief of Atha. Cairbar having, at last, murdered young king Cormac, at Temora, the army of Nathos shifted sides, and the brothers were obliged to return into Ulster, in order to pass over into Scotland. The sequel of their mournful story is related, at large, in the poem of Dar-thula.

the car-borne chiefs of Etha. The people rise on every side, like the strength of an half-extinguished fire, when the winds come, sudden, from the desert, on their rustling wings. The sound of Caithbat's* shield was heard. The heroes saw Cuchullin† in Nathos. So rolled his sparkling eyes : his steps were such on the heath. Battles are fought at Lego : the sword of Nathos prevails. Soon shalt thou behold him in thy halls, king of Temora of Groves."

"And soon may I behold the chief!" replied the blue-eyed king. "But my soul is sad for Cuchullin; his voice was pleasant in mine ear. Often have we moved, on Dora, to the chase of the dark-brown hinds : his bow was unerring on the mountains. He spoke of mighty men. He told of the deeds of my fathers; and I felt my joy. But sit thou at the feast, O bard, I have often heard thy voice. Sing in the praise of Cuchullin; and of that mighty stranger‡."

"Day rose on woody Temora, with all the beams of the east. Trathin came to the hall, the son of old Gelláma||. "I behold," he said, "a dark cloud in the desert, king of Innis-fail! a cloud it seemed at first, but now a crowd of men. One strides before them in his strength; his red hair flies in wind. His shield glitters to the beam of the east. His spear is in his hand."

"Call him to the feast of Temora," replied the king of Erin. "My hall is the house of strangers, son of the generous Gelláma! Perhaps it is the chief of Etha, coming in the sound of his renown. Hail, mighty

* Caithbat was grandfather to Cuchullin; and his shield was made use of to alarm his posterity to the battles of the family.

† That is, they saw a manifest likeness between the person of Nathos and Cuchullin.

‡ Nathos the son of Ufnoth.

|| Ceal-lamha, *white-banded*.

mighty * stranger, art thou of the friends of Cormac? But Carril, he is dark, and unlovely; and he draws his sword. Is that the son of Usnoth, bard of the times of old?"

"It is not the son of Usnoth," said Carril, "but the chief of Atha. Why comest thou in thy arms to Temora, Cairbar of the gloomy brow? Let not thy sword rise against Cormac! Whither dost thou turn thy speed?" He passed on in his darkness, and seized the hand of the king. Cormac foresaw his death, and the rage of his eyes arose. Retire, thou gloomy chief of Atha: Nathos comes with battle. Thou art bold in Cormac's hall, for his arm is weak. The sword entered the side of the king: he fell in the halls of his fathers. His fair hair is in the dust. His blood is smoking round.

And art thou fallen in thy halls †, O son of noble Artho? The shield of Cuchullin was not near. Nor the spear of thy father. Mournful are the mountains of Erin, for the chief of the people is low? Blest be thy soul, O Cormac! thou art darkened in thy youth."

"His words came to the ears of Cairbar, and he closed us ‡ in the midst of darkness. He feared to stretch his sword to the bards § though his soul was dark. Long had we pined alone: at length the noble Cathmor || came. He heard our voice from the cave; he turned the eye of his wrath on Cairbar.

"Chief

* From this expression, we understand, that Cairbar had entered the palace of Temora, in the midst of Cormac's speech.

† Althan speaks.

‡ That is, himself and Carril, as it afterwards appears.

§ The persons of the bards were so sacred, that even he, who had just murdered his sovereign, feared to kill them.

|| Cathmor appears the same disinterested hero upon every occasion. His humanity and generosity were unparalleled: in

“ Chief of Atha !” he said, “ how long wilt thou pain my soul ? Thy heart is like the rock of the desert ; and thy thoughts are dark. But thou art the brother of Cathmor, and he will fight thy battles. But Cathmor’s soul is not like thine, thou feeble hand of war ! The light of my bosom is stained with thy deeds : the bards will not sing of my renown. They may say, *Cathmor was brave, but he fought for gloomy Cairbar.* They will pass over my tomb in silence : my fame shall not be heard. Cairbar ! loose the bards : they are the sons of other times. Their voice shall be heard in other years ; after the kings of Temora have failed.”

“ We came forth at the words of the chief. We saw him in his strength. He was like thy youth, O Fingal, when thou first didst lift the spear. His face was like the plain of the sun, when it is bright : no darkness travelled over his brow. But he came with his thousands to Ullin ; to aid the red-haired Cairbar : and now he comes to revenge his death, O king of woody Morven.”

“ And let him come,” replied the king ; “ I love a foe like Cathmor. His soul is great ; his arm is strong, his battles are full of fame. But the little soul is a vapour that hovers round the marshy lake : it never rises on the green hill, lest the winds should meet it there : its dwelling is in the cave, it sends forth the dart of death. Our young heroes, O warriors, are like the renown of our fathers. They fight in youth ; they fall : their names are in the song. Fingal is amidst his darkening years. He must not fall, as an aged oak, across a secret stream. Near it are the steps of the hunter, as it lies beneath the

in short he had no fault, but too much attachment to so bad a brother as Cairbar. His family connection with Cairbar prevails, as he expresses it, over every other consideration, and makes him engage in a war, of which he did not approve.

the wind. *How has that tree fallen?* He, whistling, strides along.

“ Raise the song of joy, ye bards of Morven, that our souls may forget the past. The red stars look on us from the clouds, and silently descend. Soon shall the gray beam of the morning rise, and shew us the foes of Cormac. Fillan ! take the spear of the king ; go to Mora’s dark-brown side. Let thine eyes travel over the heath, like flames of fire. Observe the foes of Fingal, and the course of generous Cathmor. I hear a distant sound, like the falling of rocks in the desert. But strike thou thy shield, at times, that they may not come through night, and the fame of Morven cease. I begin to be alone, my son, and I dread the fall of my renown.”

The voice of the bards arose. The king leaned on the shield of Trenmor. Sleep descended on his eyes ; his future battles rose in his dreams. The host are sleeping around. Dark-haired Fillan observed the foe. His steps are on a distant hill : we hear, at times, his clanging shield.

TEMORA:

T E M O R A :

AN

E P I C P O E M.

THE ARGUMENT.

This book opens, we may suppose, about midnight, with a soliloquy of Ossian, who had retired from the rest of the army, to mourn for his son O'car. Upon hearing the noise of Cathmor's army approaching, he went to find out his brother Fillan, who kept the watch, on the hill of Mora, in the front of Fingal's army. In the conversation of the brothers, the episode of Conar, the son of Trenmor, who was the first king of Ireland, is introduced, which lays open the origin of the contests between Cael and Fir-bolg, the two nations who first possessed themselves of that island. Ossian kindles a fire on Mora; upon which Cathmor desisted from the design he had formed of surprising the army of the Caledonians. He calls a council of his chiefs; reprimands Foldath for advising a night attack, as the Irish army were so much superior in number to the enemy. The bard Fonar introduces the story of Crothar, the ancestor of the king, which throws further light on the history of Ireland, and the original pretensions of the family of Atha, to the throne of that kingdom. The Irish chiefs lie down to rest, and Cathmor himself undertakes the watch. In his circuit round the army, he is met by Ossian. The interview of the two heroes is described. Cathmor obtains a promise from Ossian, to order a funeral elegy to be sung over the grave of Cairbar; it being the opinion of the times, that the souls of the dead could not be happy, till their elegies were sung by a bard. Morning comes. Cathmor and Ossian part; and the latter, casually meeting with Carril the son of Kinsena, sends that bard, with a funeral song, to the tomb of Cairbar.

BOOK II.

FATHER* of heroes, Trenmor! dweller of
eddying winds! where there dark-red course of
thunder marks the troubled clouds! Open thou thy
Vol. II. C stormy

* Though this book has little action, it is not the least important part of Temora. The poet, in several episodes, runs up the cause of the war to the very source. The first population

stormy halls, and let the bards of old be near: let them draw near, with their songs and their half-viewless harps. No dweller of misty valley comes; no hunter unknown at his streams; but the car-borne Oscar from the folds of war. Sudden is thy change, my son, from what thou wert on dark Moilena! The blast folds thee in its skirt, and rustles along the sky. Dost thou not behold thy father, at the stream of night? The chiefs of Morven sleep far distant. They have lost no son. But ye have lost a hero, Chiefs of streamy Morven! Who could equal his strength, when battle rolled against his side, like the darkness of crowded waters? Why this cloud on Ossian's soul? It ought to burn in danger. Erin is near with her host. The king of Morven is alone. Alone thou shalt not be, my father, while I can lift the spear.

I rose, in my rattling arms. I listened to the wind of night. The shield of Fillan* is not heard. I
shook

population of Ireland, the wars between the two nations who originally possessed that island, its first race of kings, and the revolutions of its government, are important facts, and are delivered by the poet, with so little mixture of the fabulous, that one cannot help preferring his accounts to the improbable fictions of the Scottish and Irish historians. The Milesian fables of those gentlemen bear about them the marks of a late invention. To trace their legends to their source would be no difficult task; but a disquisition of this sort would extend this note too far.

* We understand, from the preceding book, that Cathmor was near with an army. When Cairbar was killed, the tribes who attended him fell back to Cathmor; who, as it afterwards appears, had taken a resolution to surprise Fingal by night. Fillan was dispatched to the hill of Mora, which was in the front of the Caledonians, to observe the motions of Cathmor. In this situation were affairs when Ossian, upon hearing the noise of the approach-
ing

hook for the son of Fingal. Why should the foe come, by night; and the dark-haired warrior fail? Distant, fullen murmurs rise: like the noise of the lake of Lego, when its waters shrink, in the days of frost, and all its bursting ice resounds. The people of Lara look to heaven, and foresee the storm. My steps are forward on the heath: the spear of Oscar in my hand. Red stars looked from high. I gleamed, along the night. I saw Fillan silent before me, bending forward from Mora's rock. He heard the shout of the foe; the joy of his soul arose. He heard my sounding tread, and turned his lifted spear.

"Comest thou, son of night, in peace? Or dost thou meet my wrath? The foes of Fingal are mine. Speak, or fear my steel. I stand, not in vain, the shield of Morven's race."

"Never mayst thou stand in vain, son of blue-eyed Clatho. Fingal begins to be alone; darkness gathers on the last of his days. Yet he has two*

C 2

sons

ing enemy, went to find out his brother. Their conversation naturally introduces the episode, concerning Conar the son of Trenmor, the first Irish monarch, which is so necessary to the understanding the foundation of the rebellion and usurpation of Cairbar and Cathmor. Fillan was the youngest of the sons of Fingal, then living. He and Bosmina, mentioned in the *battle of Lora*, were the only children of the king, by Clatho the daughter of Cathulla king of Inistore, whom he had taken to wife, after the death of Ros-crana, the daughter of Cormac Mac-Conar king of Ireland.

* That is, two sons in Ireland. Fergus, the second son of Fingal, was, at that time, on an expedition, which is mentioned in one of the lesser poems of Ossian. He, according to some traditions, was the ancestor of Fergus, the son of Ere or Arcath, commonly called *Fergus the second* in the Scottish histories. The beginning of the reign of Fergus, over the Scots, is placed, by the most approved
annals

fons who ought to shine in war. Who ought to be two beams of light, near the steps of his departure."

"Son of Fingal," replied the youth, "it is not long since I raised the spear. Few are the marks of my sword in battle, but my soul is fire. The chiefs of Bolga* crowd around the shield of generous Cathmor. Their gathering is on that heath. Shall my steps approach their host? I yielded to Oscar alone, in the strife of the race, on Cona."

"Fillan, thou shalt not approach their host; nor fall before thy fame is known. My name is heard in song: when needful I advance. From the skirts of night I shall view their gleaming tribes. Why, Fillan, didst thou speak of Oscar, to call forth my sigh? I must forget † the warrior, till the storm is rolled

annals of Scotland, in the fourth year of the fifth age: a full century after the death of Ossian. The genealogy of his family is recorded thus by the highland Senachies; *Fergus Mac-Arcath Mac-Chongéal, Mac-Fergus, Mac-Fionguel na buai: i. e.* Fergus the son of Arcath, the son of Congal, the son of Fergus, the son of Fingal *the victorious*. This subject is treated more at large, in the Dissertation prefixed to the poems.

* The southern parts of Ireland went, for some time, under the name of Bolga, from the Fir-bolg or Belgæ of Britain, who settled a colony there. *Bolg* signifies a *quiver*, from which proceeds *Fir-bolg*, i. e. *bow-men*, so called from their using bows, more than any of the neighbouring nations.

† It is remarkable, that, after this passage, Oscar is not mentioned in all Temora. The situations of the characters who act in the poem are so interesting, that others, foreign to the subject, could not be introduced with any lustre. Though the episode, which follows, may seem to flow naturally enough from the conversation of the brothers, yet I have shewn, in a preceding note, and, more at large in the Dissertation prefixed to this collection, that the poet had a farther design in view.

rolled away. Sadness ought to dwell in danger, nor the tear in the eye of war. Our fathers forgot their fallen sons, till the noise of arms was past. Then sorrow returned to the tomb, and the song of bards arose.

“Conar* was the brother of Trathal, first of mortal men. His battles were on every coast. A thousand streams rolled down the blood of his foes. His fame filled green Erin, like a pleasant gale. The nations gathered in Ullin, and they blessed the king; the king of the race of their fathers, from the land of hinds.

“The chiefs † of the south were gathered, in the darkness of their pride. In the horrid cave of Mo-
C 3 ma,

* Conar, the first king of Ireland, was the son of Trenmor, the great-grand-father of Fingal. It was on account of this family connection, that Fingal was engaged in so many wars in the cause of the race of Conar. Tho’ few of the actions of Trenmor are mentioned in Ossian’s poems, yet, from the honourable appellations bestowed on him, we may conclude that he was, in the days of the poet, the most renowned name of antiquity. The most probable opinion concerning him is, that he was the first, who united the tribes of the Caledonians, and commanded them, in chief, against the incursions of the Romans. The genealogists of the North have traced his family far back, and given a list of his ancestors to *Guanmor nan lan*, or Connor of the swords, who, according to them, was the first who crossed the *great sea*, to Caledonia, from which circumstance his name proceeded, which signifies *Great ocean*. Genealogies of so ancient a date, however, are little to be depended upon.

† The chiefs of the Fir-bolg who possessed themselves of the south of Ireland, prior, perhaps, to the settlement of the *Cael* of Caledonia, and the Hebrides, in Ulster. From the sequel, it appears that the Fir-bolg were, by much, the most powerful nation; and it is probable that the *Cael* must have submitted to them, had they not received succours from their mother-country, under the command of Conar.

ma, they mixed their secret words. Thither often, they said, the spirits of their fathers came; shewing their pale forms from the chinky rocks, and reminding them of the honour of Bolga. Why should Conar reign, the son of streamy Morven?

“ They came forth, like the streams of the desert, with the roar of their hundred tribes. Conar was a rock before them: broken they rolled on every side. But often they returned, and the sons of Ullin fell. The king stood, among the tombs of his warriors, and darkly bent his mournful face. His soul was rolled into itself; he marked the place where he was to fall; when Trathal came, in his strength, the chief of cloudy Morven. Nor did he come alone; Colgar * was at his side; Colgar the son of the king and of white-bosomed Solin-corma.

“ As Trenmor, clothed with meteors, descends from the halls of thunder, pouring the dark storm before him over the troubled sea: so Colgar descended to battle, and wasted the echoing field. His father rejoiced over the hero: but an arrow came. His tomb was raised, without a tear. The king was to revenge his son. He lightened forward in battle, till Bolga yielded at her streams.

“ When peace returned to the land, and his blue waves bore the king to Morven: then he remembered his son, and poured the silent tear. Thrice did the bards, at the cave of Furmóno, call the soul of Colgar. They called him to the hills of his land; he

* Colg-er, *fiercely-looking warrior*. Sulin-corma, *blue eyes*. Colgar was the eldest of the sons of Trathal: Comhal, who was the father of Fingal, was very young when the present expedition to Ireland happened. It is remarkable, that, of all his ancestors, the poet makes the least mention of Comhal; which, probably, proceeded from the unfortunate life and untimely death of that hero. From some passages, concerning him, we learn, indeed, that he was brave, but he wanted conduct.

he heard them in his mist. Trathal placed his sword in the cave, that the spirit of his son might rejoice.

“Colgar*, son of Trathil,” said Fillan, “thou wert renowned in youth! But the king hath not marked my sword, bright-streaming on the field. I go forth with the crowd: I return, without my fame. But the foe approaches, Ossian. I hear their murmur on the heath. The sound of their steps is like thunder, in the bosom of the ground, when the rocking hills shake their groves, and not a blast pours from the darkened sky.”

Sudden I turned on my spear, and raised the flame of an oak on high. I spread it large on Mora’s wind. Cathmor stopt in his course. Gleaming he stood, like a rock, on whose sides are the wandering of blasts; which seize its echoing streams and clothe them over with ice. So stood the friend † of strangers. The winds lift his heavy locks. Thou art the tallest of the race of Erin, king of streamy Atha!

“First of bards,” said Cathmor, “Foinar‡, call the chiefs of Erin. Call red-haired Cormac, dark-browed Malthos, the side-long-looking gloom of Marónan. Let the pride of Foldath appear: the red-rolling eye of Turlótho. Nor let Hidalla be forgot;

* The poet begins here to mark strongly the character of Fillan, who is to make so great a figure in the sequel of the poem. He has the impatience, the ambition, and fire which are peculiar to a young hero. Kindled with the fame of Colgar, he forgets his untimely fall. From Fillan’s expressions in this passage, it would seem, that he was neglected by Fingal, on account of his youth.

† Cathmor is distinguished, by this honourable title, on account of his generosity to strangers, which was so great as to be remarkable, even in those days of hospitality.

‡ *Foinar, the man of song.* Before the introduction of Christianity, a name was not imposed upon any person, till he had distinguished himself by some remarkable action, from which his name should be derived.

forgot; his voice, in danger, is like the sound of a shower, when it falls in the blasted vale, near Atha's failing stream."

They came, in their clanging arms. They bent forward to his voice, as if a spirit of their fathers spoke from a cloud of night. Dreadful shone they to the light; like the fall of the stream of Brumo*, when the meteor lights it before the nightly stranger. Shuddering, he stops in his journey, and looks up for the beam of the morn.

"Why† delights Foldath," said the king, "to pour the blood of foes, by night? Fails his arms in battle, in the beams of day? Few are the foes before us, why should we clothe us in mist? The valiant delight to shine, in the battles of their land. Thy counsel was in vain, chief of Moma; the eyes of Morven do not sleep. They are watchful, as eagles, on their mossy rocks. Let each collect, beneath his cloud, the strength of his roaring tribe. To-morrow I move in light, to meet the foes of Bolga! Mighty ‡ was he, that is low, the race of Borbar-duthul!"

"Not unmarked," said Foldath, "were my steps before thy race. In light, I met the foes of Cairbar; the warrior praised my deeds. But his stone was raised

* Brumo was a place of worship (Fingal, B. VI.) in Craca, which is supposed to be one of the isles of Shetland. It was thought, that the spirits of the deceased haunted it, by night, which adds more terror to the description introduced here, *The horrid circle of Brumo, where often, they said, the ghosts of the dead bowled round the stone of fear.*

† From this passage it appears, that it was Foldath who had advised the night attack. The gloomy character of Foldath is properly contrasted to the generous, the open Cathmor.

‡ By this exclamation, Cathmor intimates that he intends to revenge the death of his brother Cairbar.

raised without a tear? No bard sung* over Erin's king; and shall his foes rejoice along their mossy hills? No: they must not rejoice: he was the friend of Foldath. Our words were mixed, in secret, in Moma's silent cave; whilst thou, a boy in the field, pursuedst the thistle's beard. With Moma's sons I shall rush abroad, and find the foe, on his dusky hills. Fingal shall lie without his song, the gray-haired king of Selma."

"Dost thou think, thou feeble man," replied the chief of Atha; "dost thou think that he can fall, without his fame, in Erin? Could the bards be silent, at the tomb of the mighty Fingal? The song would burst in secret; and the spirit of the king rejoice. It is when thou shalt fall, that the bard shall forget the song. Thou art dark, chief of Moma, though thine arm is a tempest in war. Do I forget the king of Erin, in his narrow house? My soul is not lost to Cairbar, the brother of my love. I marked the bright beams of joy, which travelled over his cloudy mind, when I returned, with fame, to Atha of the streams."

Tall they removed, beneath the words of the king; each to his own dark tribe; where humming, they rolled on the heath, faint-glittering to the stars: like waves in the rocky bay, before the nightly wind. Beneath an oak, lay the chief of Atha: his shield, a dusky round, hung high. Near him, against a rock, leaned the stranger † of Inis-huna: that beam
of

* To have no funeral elegy sung over his tomb, was, in those days, reckoned the greatest misfortune that could befall a man; as his soul could not otherwise be admitted to the *airy ball of his fathers*.

† By the *stranger of Inis-huna*, is meant Sulmalla, the daughter of Conmor king of Inis-huna, the ancient name of that part of South-Britain, which is next to the Irish coast. She had followed Cathmor in disguise. Her story is related at large in the fourth book.

of light, with wandering locks, from Lumon of the roes. At distance rose the voice of Fonar, with the deeds of the days of old. The song fails, at times, in Lubar's growing roar.

"Crothar *," begun the bard, "first dwelt at Atha's mossy stream. A thousand † oaks, from the mountains, formed his echoing hall. The gathering of the people was there, around the feast of the blue-eyed king. But who, among his chiefs, was like the stately Crothar? Warriors kindled in his presence. The young sigh of the virgins rose. In Alnecma ‡ was the warrior honoured; the first of the race of Bolga.

"He

* Crothar was the ancestor of Cathmor, and the first of his family, who had settled in Atha. It was in his time; that the first wars were kindled between the Fir-bolg and Cael. The propriety of the episode is evident; as the contest which originally rose between Crothar and Conar, subsisted afterwards between their posterity, and was the foundation of the story of the poem.

† From this circumstance we may learn, that the art of building with stone was not known in Ireland so early as the days of Crothar. When the colony were long settled in the country, the arts of civil life began to increase among them; for we find mention made of the *towers of Atha* in the time of Cathmor, which could not well be applied to wooden buildings. In Caledonia they begun very early to build with stone. None of the houses of Fingal, excepting Ti-foirmal were of wood. Ti-foirmal was the great hall where the bards met to repeat their compositions annually, before they submitted them to the judgment of the king in Selma.

‡ Alnecma, or Alnecmacht, was the ancient name of Connaught. Ullin is still the Irish name of the province of Ulster. To avoid the multiplying of notes, I shall here give the signification of the names in this episode. Drumardo, *big-b-ridge*. Cathmin, *calm in battle*. Con-lamha, *soft hand*. Turloch, *man of the quiver*. Gormul, *blue eye*.

“ He pursued the chase in Ullin: on the moss-covered top of Drumárdo. From the wood looked the daughter of Cathmin, the blue-rolling eye of Con-láma. Her sigh rose in secret. She bent her head, midst her wandering locks. The moon looked in, at night, and saw the white-tossing of her arms? for she thought of the mighty Crothar, in the season of her dreams.

Three days feasted Crothar with Cathmin. On the fourth they awakened the hinds. Con láma moved to the chase, with all her lovely steps. She met Crothar in the narrow path. The bow, fell, at once, from her hand. She turned her face away, and half-hid it with her locks. The love of Crothar rose. He brought the white-bosomed maid to Atha. Bards raised the song in her presence; joy dwelt round the daughter of Ullin.

“ The pride of Torloch rose, a youth who loved the white-handed Con-láma. He came, with battle, to Alnecma; to Atha of the roes. Cormul went forth to the strife, the brother of car-borne Crothar. He went forth, but he fell, and the sigh of his people rose. Silent and tall, across the stream, came the darkening strength of Crothar: He rolled the foe from Alnecma, and returned, midst the joy of Con-láma

“ Battle on battle comes. Blood is poured on blood. The tombs of the valiant rise. Erin’s clouds are hung round with ghosts. The chiefs of the south gathered round the echoing shield of Crothar. He came with death to the paths of the foe. The virgins wept, by the streams of Ullin. They looked to the mist of the hill, no hunter descended from its folds. Silence darkened in the land: blasts sighed lonely on grassy tombs.

“ Descending like the eagle of heaven, with all his rustling wings, when he forsakes the blast with joy, the son of Trenmor came; Conar, arm of death, from Morven of the groves. He poured his might
along

along green Erin. Death dimly strode behind his sword. The sons of Bolga fled, from his course, as from a stream, that bursting from the stormy desert, rolls the fields together, with all their echoing woods. Crothar* met him in battle: but Alnecma's warriors fled. The king of Atha slowly retired, in the grief of his soul. He, afterwards, shone in the south; but dim as the sun of autumn; when he visits, in his robes of mist, Lara of dark streams. The withered grass is covered with dew: the field, though bright, is sad."

"Why wakes the bard before me," said Cathmor, "the memory of those who fled? Has some ghost, from his dusky cloud, bent forward to thine ear; to frighten Cathmor from the field with the tales of old? Dwellers of the folds of night, your voice is but a blast to me; which takes the gray thistle's head, and sires its beard on streams. Within my bosom is a voice; others hear it not. His soul forbids the king of Erin to shrink back from war.

Abashed the bard sinks back in night: retired, he bends above a stream, his thoughts are on the days of Atha, when Cathmor heard his song with joy. His tears come rolling down: the winds are in his beard.
Erin

* The delicacy of the bard, with regard to Crothar, is remarkable. As he was the ancestor of Cathmor, to whom the episode is addressed, the bard softens his defeat, by only mentioning that his *people fled*. Cathmor took the song of Fonar in an unfavourable light. The bards, being of the order of the Druids, who pretended to a foreknowledge of events, were supposed to have some supernatural pre-science of futurity. The king thought, that the choice of, Fonar's song proceeded, from his foreseeing the unfortunate issue of the war; and that his own fate was shadowed out in that of his ancestor Crothar. The attitude of the bard, after the reprimand of his patron, is picturesque and affecting. We admire the speech of Cathmor, but lament the effect it has on the feeling soul of the good old poet.

Erin sleeps around. No sleep comes down on Cathmor's eyes. Dark, in his soul, he saw the spirit of low-laid Cairbar. He saw him, without his song, rolled in a blast of night. He rose. His steps were round the host. He struck, at times, his echoing shield. The sound reached Ossian's ear, on Mora of the hinds.

"Fillan," I said, "the foes advance. I hear the shield of war. Stand thou in the narrow path. Ossian shall mark their course. If over my fall the host shall pour; then be thy buckler heard. Awake the king on his heath, lest his fame should cease." I strode, in all my rattling arms; wide-bounding over a stream that darkly winded, in the field, before the king of Atha. Green Atha's king, with lifted spear, came forward on my course. Now would we have mixed in horrid fray, like two contending ghosts, that bending forward, from two clouds, send forth the roaring winds; did not Ossian behold, on high, the helmet of Erin's kings. The eagle's wing spread above it, rustling in the breeze. A red star looked through the plumes. I stooped the lifted spear.

"The helmet of kings is before me! Who art thou, son of night? Shall Ossian's spear be renowned, when thou art lowly-laid?" At once he dropt the gleaming lance. Growing before me seemed the form. He stretched his hand in night; and spoke the words of kings.

"Friend of the spirit of heroes, do I meet thee thus in shades? I have wished for thy stately steps in Atha, in the days of feasts. Why should my spear now arise? The sun must behold us, Ossian; when we bend, gleaming, in the strife. Future warriors shall mark the place, and shuddering, think of other years. They shall mark it, like the haunt of ghosts, pleasant and dreadful to the soul."

"And shall it be forgot," I said, "where we meet in peace? Is the remembrance of battles always
VOL. II. D pleasant

pleasant to the soul? Do not we behold, with joy, the place where our fathers feasted? But our eyes are full of tears, on the field of their wars. This stone shall rise, with all its moss, and speak to other years. *Here Cathmor and Ossian met! the warriors met in peace!* When thou, O stone, shalt fall: and Lubar's stream roll quite away! then shall the traveller come, and bend here, perhaps, in rest. When the darkened moon is rolled over his head, our shadowy forms may come, and, mixing with his dreams, remind him of this place. But why turnest thou so dark away, son of Borbar-duthul*?"

"Not forgot, son of Fingal, shall we ascend these winds. Our deeds are streams of light, before the eyes of bards. But darkness is rolled on Atha: the king is low, without his song: still there was a beam towards Cathmor from his stormy soul; like the moon, in a cloud, amidst the dark-red course of thunder."

"Son of Erin," I replied, "my wrath dwells not in his house†. My hatred flies, on eagle wing, from the foe that is low. He shall hear the song of bards; Cairbar shall rejoice on his winds."

Cathmor's swelling soul arose: he took the dagger from his side; and placed it gleaming in my hand. He placed it, in my hand, with sighs, and, silent, strode

* Borbar-duthul, *the furlly warrior of the dark-brown eyes*. That his name suited well with his character, we may easily conceive, from the story delivered concerning him, by Malchos, toward the end of the sixth book. He was the brother of that Coleulla, who is mentioned in the episode which begins the fourth book.

† The grave often poetically called a house. This reply of Ossian abounds with the most exalted sentiments of a noble mind. Though, of all men living, he was the most injured by Cairbar, yet he laid aside his rage as the *fee was low*. How different is this from the behaviour of the heroes of other ancient poems. *Cynibius aurem vellit*.

strode away. Mine eyes followed his departure. He dimly gleamed, like the form of a ghost, which meets a traveller by night, on the dark-skirted heath. His words are dark like songs of old: with morning strides the unfinished shade away.

Who * comes from Lubar's vale? From the folds of the morning mist? The drops of heaven are on his head. His steps are in the paths of the sad. It is Carril of other times. He comes from Tura's silent cave. I behold it dark in the rock, through the thin folds of mist. There, perhaps, Cuchullin sits, on the blast which bends its trees. Pleasant is the song of the morning from the bard of Erin!

"The waves crowd away for fear: they hear the sound of thy coming forth, O sun! Terrible is thy beauty, son of heaven, when death is folded in thy locks; when thou rollest thy vapours before thee, over the blasted host. But pleasant is thy beam to the hunter, sitting by the rock in a storm, when thou lookest from thy parted cloud, and brightenest his dewy locks; he looks down on the streamy vale, and beholds the descent of roes. How long shalt thou rise on war, and roll, a bloody shield, through heaven? I see the deaths of heroes dark-wandering over thy face?"

"Why wander the words of Carril! does the son of heaven mourn! he is unstained in his course, ever rejoicing in his fire. Roll on, thou careless light;

D 2

thou

* The morning of the second day, from the opening of the poem, comes on. After the death of Cuchullin, Carril, the son of Kinsena, his bard, retired to the cave of Tura, which was in the neighbourhood of Mei-lena, the scene of the poem of Temora. His casual appearance here enables Ossian to fulfil immediately the promise he had made to Cathmor, of causing the *funeral song* to be pronounced over the tomb of Cairbar. This book takes up only the space of a few hours.

thou too, perhaps, must fall. Thy dun robe * may seize thee, struggling, in thy sky.

“ Pleasant is the voice of the song, O Carril, to Ossian’s soul ! It is like the shower of the morning, when it comes through the rustling vale, on which the sun looks through mist, just rising from his rocks. But this is no time, O bard, to sit down, at the strife of song. Fingal is in arms on the vale. Thou seest the flaming shield of the king. His face darkens between his locks. He beholds the wide rolling of Erin.

“ Does not Carril behold that tomb, beside the roaring stream ? Three stones lift their gray heads, beneath a bending oak. A king is lowly laid : give thou his soul to the wind. He is the brother of Cathmor ! open his airy hall. Let thy song be a stream of joy to Cairbar’s darkened ghost.”

TEMORA:

* By the *dun robe* of the sun, is probably meant an eclipse.

T E M O R A :

AN

E P I C P O E M.

THE ARGUMENT.

Morning coming on, Fingal, after a speech to his people, devolves the command on Gaul, the son of Morni; it being the custom of the times, that the king should not engage, till the necessity of affairs required his superior valour and conduct. The king and Ossian retire to the rock of Cormul, which overlooked the field of battle. The bards sing the war-song. The general conflict is described. Gaul, the son of Morni, distinguishes himself; kills Tur-lathon, chief of Moruth, and other chiefs of lesser name. On the other hand, Foldath, who commanded the Irish army (for Cathmor, after the example of Fingal, kept himself from battle) fights gallantly; kills Connal, chief of Dunlora, and advances to engage Gaul himself. Gaul, in the mean time, being wounded in the hand, by a random arrow, is covered by Fillan, the son of Fingal, who performs prodigies of valour. Night comes on. The horn of Fingal recalls his his army. The bards meet them, with a congratulatory song, in which the praises of Gaul and Fillan are particularly celebrated. The chiefs sit down at a feast; Fingal misses Connal. The episode of Connal and Duthcaron is introduced, which throws further light on the ancient history of Ireland. Carril is dispatched to raise the tomb of Connal. The action of this book takes up the second day, from the opening of the poem.

BOOK III.

WHO is that, at blue-streaming Lubar; by the bending hill of the roes? Tall, he leans on an oak torn from high, by nightly winds. Who but Comhal's son, brightening in the last of his fields? His gray hair is on the breeze: he half unsheathes the sword of Luno. His eyes are turned to Moi-lena, to the dark-rolling of foes. Dost thou hear the voice of the king? It is like the bursting of a stream, in the desert, when it comes between its echoing rocks, to the blasted field of the sun.

“ Wide-skirted comes down the foe! Sons of woody Morven, arise. Be ye like the rocks of my land, on whose brown sides are the rolling of waters. A beam of joy comes on my soul; I see them mighty before me. It is when the foe is feeble, that the sighs of Fingal are heard; lest death should come, without renown, and darkness dwell on his tomb. Who shall lead the war, against the host of Alnecma? It is only when danger grows, that my sword shall shine. Such was the custom, heretofore, of Trenmor the ruler of winds: and thus descended to battle the blue-shielded Trathal.”

The chiefs bend towards the king: each darkly seems to claim the war. They tell, by halves, their mighty deeds: and turn their eyes on Erin. But far before the rest the son of Morni stood: silent he stood, for who had not heard of the battles of Gaul? They rose within his soul. His hand, in secret, seized the sword. The sword which he brought from Strumon, when the strength of Morni failed*. On.

* Strumon, *stream of the hill*, the name of the seat of the family of Gaul, in the neighbourhood of Selma. During Gaul's expedition to Tromathon, mentioned in the poem of *Oithona*, Morni his father died. Morni ordered the *sword of Strumon*, (which had been preserved, in the family, as a relique, from the days of Colgach the most renowned of his ancestors) to be laid by his side, in the tomb: at the same time, leaving it in charge to his son, not to take it from thence, till he was reduced to the last extremity. Not long after, two of his brothers being slain, in battle, by Coldaronnán, chief of Clutha, Gaul went to his father's tomb to take the sword. His address to the spirit of the deceased hero, is the only part now remaining, of a poem of Ossian, on the subject. I shall here lay it before the reader.

Gaul. “ Breaker of echoing shields, whose head is deep in shades; hear me from the darkness of Clora, O son of Colgach, hear!

No

On his spear stood the son of Clatho* in the wandering of his locks. Thrice he raised his eyes to Fingal: his voice thrice failed him, as he spoke. Fillan could not boast of battles; at once he strode away. Bent over a distant stream he stood: the tear hung in his eye. He struck, at times, the thistle's head, with his inverted spear.

Nor is he unseen of Fingal. Sidelong he beheld his son. He beheld him, with bursting joy; and turned, amidst his crowded soul. In silence turned the

No rustling, like the eagle's wing, comes over the course of my streams. Deep-bosomed in the mist of the desert, O king of Strumon, hear!

Dwellest thou in the shadowy breeze, that pours its dark wave over the grass? Cease to strew the beard of the thistle? O chief of Clora, hear!

Or ridest thou on a beam, amidst the dark trouble of clouds? Pourest thou the loud wind on seas, to roll their blue waves over isles? hear me, father of Gaul; amidst thy terrors, hear!

The rustling of eagles is heard, the murmuring oaks shake their heads on the hills; dreadful and pleasant is thy approach, friend of the dwelling of heroes.

Morni. Who awakes me, in the midst of my cloud, where my locks of mist spread on the winds? Mixed with the noise of streams, why rises the voice of Gaul?

Gaul. My foes are around me, Morni: their dark ships descend from their waves. Give the sword of Strumon, that beam which thou hidest in thy night.

Morni. Take the sword of resounding Strumon; I look on thy war, my son; I lo k, a dim meteor, from my cloud: blue-shielded Gaul, destroy."

* Clatho was the daughter of Cathulla, king of Inistore. Fingal, in one of his expeditions to that island, fell in love with Clatho, and took her to wife, after the death of Roscrana, the daughter of Cormac, king of Ireland.

Clatho was the mother of Ryno, Fillan, and Bosmina, mentioned in the *Battle of Lora*, Fillan is often called the son of Clatho, to distinguish him from those sons which Fingal had by Roscrana.

the king towards Mora of woods. He hid the big tear with his locks. At length his voice is heard.

“First of the sons of Morni; thou rock that defiest the storm! Lead thou my battle, for the race of low-laid Cormac. No boy’s staff is thy spear: no harmless beam of light thy sword. Son of Morni of steeds, behold the foe; destroy. Fillan, observe the chief: he is not calm in strife: nor burns he, heedless, in battle; my son, observe the king. He is strong as Lubar’s stream, but never foams and roars. High on cloudy Mora, Fingal shall behold the war. Stand, Ossian*, near thy father, by the falling stream. Raise the voice, O bards; Morven, move beneath the sound. It is my latter field; clothe it over with light.”

As the sudden rising of winds; or distant rolling of troubled seas, when some dark ghost, in wrath, heaves the billows over an isle, the seat of mist, on the deep, for many dark-brown years: so terrible is the sound of the host, wide-moving over the field. Gaul is tall before them: the streams glitter within his strides. The bards raised the song by his side; he struck his shield between. On the skirts of the blast, the tuneful voices rose.

On Crona, said the bards, there bursts a stream by night. It swells, in its own dark course, till morning’s early beam. Then comes it white from the hill, with the rocks and their hundred groves. Far be my steps from Crona: Death is tumbling there. Be ye a stream from Mora, sons of cloudy Morven.

“Who rises, from his car, on Clutha? the hills are troubled before the king! The dark woods echo round, and lighten at his steel. See him, amidst the foe, like Colgach’s† sportful ghost; when he scatters
the

* Ullin being sent to Morven with the body of Oscar, Ossian attends his father, in quality of chief bard.

† There are some traditions, but, I believe, of late invention, that this Colgach was the same with the Galgacus

the clouds and rides the eddying wings ! It is Morni* of the bounding steeds ! Be like thy father, Gaul !

“ Selma is opened wide. Bards take the trembling harps. Ten youths carry the oak of the feast. A distant sun beam marks the hill. The dusky waves of the blast fly over the fields of grass. Why art thou so silent, Morven ? The king returns with all his fame. Did not the battle roar : yet peaceful is his brow ? It roared, and Fingal overcame. Be like thy father, Fillan.”

They moved beneath the song. High waved their arms, as rushy fields, beneath autumnal winds. On Mora stood the king in arms. Mist flies round his buckler broad, as, aloft, it hung on a bow, on Cormul's mossy rock. In silence I stood by Fingal, and turned my eyes on Cromla's† wood : lest I should

gacus of Tacitus. He was the ancestor of Gaul, the son of Morni, and appears, from some, really ancient, traditions, to have been king, or Vergobret, of the Caledonians ; and hence proceeded the pretensions of the family of Morni to the throne, which created a good deal of disturbance, both to Comhal and his son Fingal. The first was killed in battle by that tribe ; and it was after Fingal was grown up, that they were reduced to obedience. Colgach signifies *fiercely-looking* ; which is a very proper name for a warrior, and is probably the origin of Galgacus ; tho' I believe it a matter of mere conjecture, that the Colgach here mentioned was the same with that hero. I cannot help observing, with how much propriety the song of the bards is conducted. Gaul, whose experience might have rendered his conduct cautious in war, has the example of his father, just rushing to battle, set before his eyes. Fillan, on the other hand, whose youth might make him impetuous and unguarded in action, is put in mind of the sedate and serene behaviour of Fingal upon like occasions.

* The expedition of Morni to Clutha, alluded to, is handed down in tradition.

† The mountain Cromla was in the neighbourhood of the scene of this poem ; which was nearly the same with that of Fingal.

should behold the host, and rush amidst my swelling soul. My foot is forward on the heath. I glittered, tall in steel: like the falling stream of Tromo, which nightly winds bind over with ice. The boy sees it, on high, gleaming to the early beam: towards it he turns his ear, and wonders why it is so silent.

Nor bent over a stream is Cathmor, like a youth in a peaceful field: wide he drew forward the war, a dark and troubled wave. But when he beheld Fingal on Mora, his generous pride arose. "Shall the chief of Atha fight, and no king in the field? Foldath lead my people forth. Thou art a beam of fire."

Forth issued the chief of Moma, like a cloud, the robe of ghosts. He drew his sword, a flame, from his side; and bade the battle move. The tribes, like ridgy waves, dark pour their strength around. Haughty is his stride before them: his red eye rolls in wrath. He called the chief of Dunratho*; and his words were heard.

"Cormul, thou beholdest that path. It winds green behind the foe. Place thy people there; lest Morven should escape from my sword. Bards of green-valleyed Erin, let no voice of yours arise. The sons of Morven must fall without song. They are the foes of Cairbar. Hereafter shall the traveller meet their dark, thick mist on Lena, where it wanders, with their ghosts, beside the reedy lake. Never shall

* *Dun-ratho, a bill with a plain on its top. Cormul, blue eye.* Foldath dispatches, here, Cormul to lie in ambush behind the army of the Caledonians. This speech, suits well with the character of Foldath, which is, throughout, haughty and presumptuous. Towards the latter end of his speech, we find the opinion of the times, concerning the unhappiness of the souls of those who were buried without the funeral song. This doctrine, no doubt, was inculcated by the bards, to make their order respectable and necessary.

shall they rise, without song, to the dwelling of winds."

Cormul darkened, as he went : behind him rushed his tribe. They sunk beyond the rock : Gaul spoke to Fillan of Moruth ; as his eye pursued the course of the dark-eyed king of Dunratho. "Thou beholdest the steps of Cormul ; let thine arm be strong. When he is low, son of Fingal, remember Gaul in war. Here I fall forward into battle, amidst the ridge of shields."

The sign of death arose : the dreadful sound of Morni's shield. Gaul poured his voice between. Fingal rose, high on Mora. He saw them from wing to wing, bending in the strife. Gleaming, on his own dark hill, the strength of Atha stood. They were like two spirits of heaven, standing each on his gloomy cloud ; when they pour abroad the winds, and lift the roaring seas. The blue-tumbling of waves is before them, marked with the paths of whales. Themselves are calm and bright ; and the gale lifts their locks of mist.

What beam of light hangs high in air ? It is Morni's dreadful sword. Death is strewed on thy paths, O Gaul ; thou foldest them together in thy rage. Like a young oak falls Tur-lathon *, with his branches round him. His high-bosomed spouse stretches her white arms, in dreams, to the returning king, as she sleeps by gurgling Moruth, in her disordered locks. It is his ghost, Oichoma ; the chief is lowly laid. Harken not to the winds for Tur-lathon's echoing shield. It is pierced, by his streams, and its sound is past away.

Not peaceful is the hand of Foldath : he winds his course in blood. Connal met him in fight ; they mixed their clanging steel. Why should mine eyes behold

* Tur-lathon, *broad trunk of a tree*. Moruth, *great stream*. Oichaoma, *mild maid*. Dun-lora, *the bill of the noisy stream*. Duth-caron, *dark-brown man*.

behold them ! Connal, thy locks are gray. Thou wert the friend of strangers, at the moss-covered rock of Dun-lora. When the skies were rolled together ; then thy feast was spread. The stranger heard the winds without ; and rejoiced at thy burning oak. Why, son of Duth-caron, art thou laid in blood ! The blasted tree bends above thee : thy shield lies broken near. Thy blood mixes with the stream ; thou breaker of the shields !

I took the spear, in my wrath ; but Gaul rushed forward on the foe. The feeble pass by his side ; his rage is turned on Moma's chief. Now they had raised their deathful spears : unseen an arrow came. It pierced the hand of Gaul ; his steel fell sounding to earth. Young Fillan came*, with Cormul's shield, and stretched it large before the king. Foldath sent his shout abroad, and kindled all the field : as a blast that lifts the broad-winged flame, over Lumon's † echoing groves.

“ Son of blue-eyed Clatho,” said Gaul, “ thou art a beam from heaven ; that coming on the troubled deep, binds up the tempest's wing. Cormul is fallen before thee. Early art thou in the fame of thy fathers. Rush not too far, my hero, I cannot lift the spear to aid. I stand harmless in battle : but my voice shall be poured abroad. The sons of Morven shall hear, and remember my former deeds.”

His terrible voice rose on the wind, the host bend forward in the fight. Often had they heard him, at Strumon, when he called them to the chase of the hinds. Himself stood tall, amidst the war, as an oak in

* Fillan had been dispatched by Gaul to oppose Cormul, who had been sent by Foldath to lie in ambush behind the Caledonian army. It appears that Fillan had killed Cormul, otherwise he could not be supposed to have possessed himself of the shield of that chief.

† Lumon, *bending bill* ; a mountain in Innis-huna, or that part of South-Britain which is over-against the Irish coast.

in the skirts of a storm, which now is clothed, on high, in mist: then shews its broad, waving head; the musing hunter lifts his eye from his own rushy field.

My soul pursues thee, O Fillan, through the path of thy fame. Thou rolledst the foe before thee. Now Foldath, perhaps, would fly; but night came down with its clouds; and Cathmor's horn was heard. The sons of Morven heard the voice of Fingal, from Mora's gathered mist. The bards poured their song, like dew, on the returning war.

"Who comes from Strumon," they said, "amidst her wandering locks? She is mournful in her steps, and lifts her blue eyes towards Erin. Why art thou sad, Evirchoma*? Who is like thy chief in renown? He descended dreadful to battle; he returns, like a light from a cloud. He lifted the sword in wrath: they shrunk before blue-shielded Gaul!

"Joy, like the rustling gale, comes on the soul of the king. He remembers the battles of old; the days, wherein his fathers fought. The days of old return on Fingal's mind, as he beholds the renown of his son. As the sun rejoices, from his cloud, over the tree his beams have raised, as it shakes its lonely head on the heath; so joyful is the king over Fillan.

"As the rolling of thunder on hills, when Lara's fields are still and dark, such are the steps of Morven pleasant and dreadful to the ear. They return with their sound, like eagles to their dark-browed rock, after the prey is torn on the field, the dun sons of the bounding hind. Your fathers rejoice from their clouds, sons of streamy Cona."

Such was the nightly voice of bards, on Mora of the hinds. A flame rose, from an hundred oaks,

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E

which

* Evir-choama, *mild and stately maid*, the wife of Gaul. She was the daughter of Casdu-conglas, chief of I-dronlo, one of the Hebrides.

which winds had torn from Cormui's sleep. The feast is spread in the mist: around sat the gleaming chiefs. Fingal is there in his strength; the eagle-wing* of his helmet sounds: the rustling blasts of the west, unequal rushed through night. Long looked the king in silence round: at length his words were heard.

"My soul feels a want in our joy. I behold a breach among my friends. The head of one tree is low: the squally wind pours in on Selma. Where is the chief of Dun-lora! Ought he to be forgot at the feast? When did he forget the stranger, in the midst of his echoing hall? Ye are silent in my presence! Connal is then no more. Joy meet thee, O warrior, like a stream of light. Swift be thy course to thy fathers, in the folds of the mountain-winds. Ossian, thy soul is fire: kindle the memory of the king. Awake the battles of Connal, when first he shone in war. The locks of Connal were gray; his days of youth † were mixed with mine. In one day Duth-caron first stung our bows against the roes of Dun-lora."

"Many,"

* The kings of Morven and Ireland had a plume of eagle's feathers, by way of ornament, in their helmets. It was from this distinguished mark that Ossian knew Cathmor, in the second book.

† After the death of Comhal, and during the usurpation of the tribe of Morni, Fingal was educated in private by Duth-caron. It was then he contracted that intimacy, with Connal the son of Duth-caron, which occasions his regretting so much his fall. When Fingal was grown up, he soon reduced the tribe of Morni; and, as it appears from the subsequent episode, sent Duth-caron and his son Connal to the aid of Cormac, the son of Conar, king of Ireland, who was driven to the last extremity, by the insurrections of the Fir-bolg. This episode throws farther light on the contests between the Cael and Fir-bolg; and is the more valuable upon that account.

“Many,” I said, “are our paths to battle, in green-hilled Innis fail. Often did our sails arise, over the blue-tumbling waters; when we came, in other days, to aid the race of Conar. The strife roared once in Alnecma, at the foam-covered streams of Duth-úla*. With Cormac descended to battle Duth-caron from cloudy Morven. Nor descended Duth-caron alone, his son was by his side, the long-haired youth of Connal, lifting the first of his spears. Thou didst command them, O Fingal, to aid the king of Erin.

“ Like the bursting strength of a stream, the sons of Bolga rushed to war: Colc-ulla † was before them, the chief of blue-streaming Atha. The battle was mixed on the plain, like the meeting of two stormy seas. Cormac † shone in his own strife,

E 2.

bright

* Duth-ula, a river in Connaught; it signifies, *dark-rufhing water*.

† Colc-ulla, *firm look in readiness*; he was the brother of Borbar-duthul, the father of Cairbar and Cathmor, who, after the death of Cormac the son of Artho, successively mounted the Irish throne.

‡ Cormac, the son of Conar, the second king of Ireland, of the race of the Caledonians. This insurrection of the Fir-bolg happened towards the latter end of the long reign of Cormac. From several episodes and poems, it appears, that he never possessed the Irish throne peaceably. The party of the family of Atha had made several attempts to overturn the succession in the race of Conar, before they effected it, in the minority of Cormac, the son of Artho. Ireland, from the most ancient accounts concerning it, seems to have been always so disturbed by domestic commotions, that it is difficult to say, whether it ever was, for any length of time, subject to one monarch. It is certain, that every province, if not every small district, had its own king. One of those petty princes assumed, at times, the title of king of Ireland, and, on account of his superior force, or in cases of public danger, was acknowledged

bright as the forms of his fathers. But, far before the rest, Duth-caron hewed down the foe. Nor slept the arm of Connal, by his father's side. Atha prevailed on the plain: like scattered mist, fled the people of Ullin.*

"Then rose the sword of Duth-caron, and the steel of broad-shielded Connal. They shaded their flying friends, like two rocks with their heads of pine. Night came down on Duth-ula: silent strode the chiefs over the field. A mountain stream roared across the path, nor could Duth-caron bound over its course. Why stands my father?" said Connal, "I hear the rushing foe."

"Fly, Connal," he said; "thy father's strength begins to fail. I come wounded from battle; here let me rest in night. "But thou shalt not remain alone, said Connal's bursting sigh. My shield is an eagle's wing to cover the king of Dun-lora." He bends dark above the chief: the mighty Duth-caron dies.

"Day rose, and night returned. No lonely bard appeared, deep-musing on the heath: and could Connal leave the tomb of his father, till he should receive his fame? He bent the bow against the roes of Duth-ula; he spread the lonely feast. Seven nights he laid his head on the tomb, and saw his father in his dreams. He saw him rolled dark, in a blast, like the vapour of reedy Lego. At length the
steps

ledged by the rest as such; but the succession, from father to son, does not appear to have been established. It was the divisions amongst themselves, arising from the bad constitution of their government, that, at last, subjected the Irish to a foreign yoke.

* The inhabitants of Ullin or Ulster, who were of the race of the Caledonians, seem, alone, to have been the firm friends to the succession in the family of Conar. The Fir-bolg were only subject to them by constraint, and embraced every opportunity to throw off their yoke.

steps of Colgan* came, the bard of high Temora. Duth-caron received his fame, and brightened, as he rose on the wind."

"Pleasant to the ear," said Fingal, "is the praise of the kings of men; when their bows are strong in battle;

E 3

battle;

* Colgan, the son of Cathmul, was the principal bard of Cormac Mac-Conar, king of Ireland. Part of an old poem, on the loves of Fingal and Ros-crana, is still preserved, and goes under the name of this Colgan; but whether it is of his composition, or the production of a later age, I shall not pretend to determine. Be that as it will, it appears, from the obsolete phrases which it contains, to be very ancient; and its poetical merit may perhaps excuse me, for laying a translation of it before the reader. What remains of the poem is a dialogue in a lyric measure, between Fingal and Ros-crana, the daughter of Cormac. She begins with a soliloquy, which is overheard by Fingal.

Ros-crana. "By night, came a dream to Ros-crana! I feel my beating soul. No vision of the forms of the dead, came to the blue eyes of Erin. But, rising from the wave of the north, I beheld him bright in his locks. I beheld the son of the king. My beating soul is high. I laid my head down in night; again ascended the form. Why delayest thou thy coming, young rider of streamy waves!

But, there, far-distant, he comes; where seas roll their green ridges in mist! Young dweller of my soul; why dost thou delay.

Fingal. It was the soft voice of *Moi-lena*! the pleasant breeze of the valley of roes! But why dost thou hide thee in shades? Young love of heroes rise. Are not thy steps covered with light? In thy groves thou appearest, *Ros-crana*, like the sun in the gathering of clouds. Why dost thou hide thee in shades? Young love of heroes rise.

Ros-crana. My fluttering soul is high! Let me turn from the steps of the king. He has heard my secret voice, and shall my blue eyes roll, in his presence! Roe of the hill of moss, toward thy dwelling I move. Meet me,

ye

battle; when they soften at the sight of the sad. Thus let my name be renowned, when bards shall lighten my rising soul. Carril, son of Kinfena; take the bards and raise a tomb. To night let Connal dwell, within his narrow house: let not the soul of the valiant wander on the winds. Faint glimmers the moon on Moi-lena, through the broad-headed groves of the hill: raise stones, beneath its beams, to all the fallen in war. Though no chiefs were they, yet their hands were strong in fight. They were my rock in danger: the mountain from which I spread my eagle-wings. Thence am I renowned: Carril forget not the low."

Loud, at once, from the hundred bards, rose the song of the tomb. Carril strode before them; they are the murmur of streams behind him. Silence dwells in the vales of Moi-lena, where each, with its own dark stream, is winding between the hills. I heard the voice of the bards, lessening, as they moved along. I leaned forward from my shield; and felt the kindling of my soul. Half-formed the words of my song, burst forth upon the wind. So hears a tree, on the vale, the voice of spring around: it pours its green leaves to the sun, and shakes its lonely head. The hum of the mountain bee is near
it;

ye breezes of Mora. as I move thro' the valley of winds. But why should he ascend his ocean? Son of heroes, my soul is thine! My steps shall not move to the desert: the light of Ros-crana is here.

Fingal. It was the light tread of a ghost, the fair dweller of eddying winds. Why deceivest thou me, with thy voice? Here let me rest in shades. Shouldst thou stretch thy white arm, from thy grove, thou sun-beam of Cormac of Erin!

Ros-crana. He is gone! and my blue eyes are dim: faint rolling, in all my tears. But, there, I behold him, alone; king of Morven, my soul is thine. Ah me! what clanging of armour! Colc-ulla of Atha is near!"

it; the hunter sees it, with joy, from the blasted heath.

Young Fillan, at a distance stood. His helmet lay glittering on the ground. His dark hair is loose to the blast: a beam of light is Clatho's son. He heard the words of the king with joy; and leaned forward on his spear.

"My son," said car-borne Fingal; "I saw thy deeds, and my soul was glad. The fame of our fathers, I said, bursts from its gathered cloud. Thou art brave, son of Clatho; but headlong in the strife. So did not Fingal advance, though he never feared a foe. Let thy people be a ridge behind; they are thy strength in the field. Then shalt thou be long renowned, and behold the tombs of thy fathers. The memory of the past returns, my deeds in other years: when first I descended from ocean on the green-valleyed isle. We bend towards the voice of the king. The moon looks abroad from her cloud. The gray-skirted mist is near, the dwelling of the ghosts.

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E P I C P O E M.

THE ARGUMENT.

The second night continues. Fingal relates, at the feast, his own first expedition into Ireland, and his marriage with Ros-crana, the daughter of Cormac, king of that island. The Irish chiefs convene in the presence of Cathmor. The situation of the king described. The story of Sul-malla, the daughter of Connor, king of Inishuna, who, in the disguise of a young warrior, had followed Cathmor to the war. The sullen behaviour of Foldath, who had commanded in the battle of the preceding day, renews the difference between him and Malthos; but Cathmor, interposing, ends it. The chiefs feast, and hear the song of Fonar the bard. Cathmor returns to rest, at a distance from the army. The ghost of his brother Cairbar appears to him in a dream, and obscurely foretels the issue of the war. The soliloquy of the king. He discovers Sul-malla. Morning comes. Her soliloquy closes the book.

BOOK IV.

“**B**ENEATH* an oak,” said the king, “I sat
on Selma’s streamy rock, when Connal rose,
from the sea, with the broken spear of Duth-caron.
Far-distant stood the youth, and turned away his
eyes; for he remembered the steps of his father, on
his own green hills. I darkened in my place: dusky
thoughts

* This episode has an immediate connection with the story of Connal and Duth-caron, in the latter end of the third book. Fingal, sitting beneath an oak, near the palace of Selma, discovers Connal just landing from Ireland. The danger which threatened Cormac king of Ireland induces him to sail immediately to that island. The story is introduced, by the king, as a pattern for the future behaviour of Fillan, whose rashness in the preceding battle is reprimanded.

thoughts rolled over my soul. The kings of Erin rose before me. I half-unsheathed my sword. Slowly approached the chiefs; they lifted up their silent eyes. Like a ridge of clouds, they wait for the bursting forth of my voice: it was to them, a wind from heaven, to roll the mist away.

“ I bade my white sails to rise, before the roar of Cona’s wind. Three hundred youths looked, from their waves, on Fingal’s bossy shield. High on the mast it hung, and marked the dark-blue sea. But when the night came down, I struck, at times, the warning boss: I struck, and looked on high, for fiery-haired Ul-erin*. Nor wanting was the star of heaven: It travelled red between the clouds: I pursued the lovely beam, on the faint-gleaming deep. With morning, Erin rose in mist. We came into the bay of Moi-lena, where its blue waters tumbled, in the bosom of echoing woods. Here Cormac, in his secret hall, avoided the strength of Colculla. Nor he alone avoids the foe: the blue eye of Ros-crána is there: Ros-crána†, white-handed maid, the daughter of the king.

“ Gray, on his pointless spear, came forth the aged steps of Cormac. He smiled, from his waving locks, but grief was in his soul. He saw us few before him, and his sigh arose. “ I see the arms of Trenmor,” he said; “ and these are the steps of the king! Fingal! thou art a beam of light to Cormac’s darkened

* Ul-erin, *the guide to Ireland*, a star known by that name in the days of Fingal, and very useful to those who sailed, by night, from the Hebrides, or Caledonia, to the coast of Ulster.

† Ros crana, *the beam of the rising sun*; she was the mother of Ossian. The Irish bards relate strange fictions concerning this princess. Their stories, however, concerning Fingal, if they mean him by *Fion Mac-Gommal*, are so inconsistent and notoriously fabulous, that they do not deserve to be mentioned; for they evidently bear, along with them, the marks of late invention.

darkened soul. Early is thy fame, my son: but strong are the foes of Erin. They are like the roar of streams in the land, son of car-borne Comhal."

"Yet they may be rolled* away," I said, in my rising soul. "We are not of the race of the feeble, king of blue-shielded hosts. Why should fear come amongst us, like a ghost of night? The soul of the valiant grows, as foes increase in the field. Roll no darkness, king of Erin, on the young in war."

"The bursting tears of the king came down. He seized my hands in silence. "Race of the daring Trenmor, I roll no cloud before thee. Thou burnest in the fire of thy fathers. I behold thy fame. It marks thy course in battles, like a stream of light. But wait the coming of Cairbar†: my son must join thy sword. He calls the sons of Ullin, from all their distant streams."

"We came to the hall of the king, where it rose in the midst of rocks: rocks, on whose dark sides, were the marks of streams of old. Broad oaks bend around with their moss: the thick birch waves its green head. Half-hid, in her shady grove, Roscrana raised the song. Her white hands rose on the harp.

* Cormac had said that his foes were *like the roar of streams*, and Fingal continues the metaphor. The speech of the young hero is spirited, and consistent with that sedate intrepidity, which eminently distinguishes his character throughout.

† Cairbar, the son of Cormac, was afterwards king of Ireland. His reign was short. He was succeeded by his son Artho, the father of that Cormac who was murdered by Cairbar the son of Borbar-duthul. Cairbar, the son of Cormac, long after his son Artho was grown to man's estate, had, by his wife Beltanno, another son, whose name was Ferard-artho. He was the only one remaining of the race of Conar the first king of Ireland, when Fingal's expedition against Cairbar the son of Borbar-duthul happened. See more of Ferard-artho in the eighth book.

harp. I beheld her blue-rolling eyes. She was like a spirit* of heaven half-folded in the skirt of a cloud.

“ Three days we feasted at Moi-lena; she rose bright amidst my troubled soul. Cormac beheld me dark. He gave the white-bosomed maid. She came with bending eye, amidst the wandering of her heavy locks. She came. Straight the battle roared. Colculla rushed; I seized my spear. My sword rose, with

* The attitude of Ros-crana is aptly illustrated by this simile; for the ideas of those times, concerning the spirits of the deceased, were not so gloomy and disagreeable, as those of succeeding ages. The spirits of women, it was supposed, retained that beauty, which they possessed while living, and transported themselves, from place to place, with that gliding motion, which Homer ascribes to the gods. The descriptions which poets, less ancient than Ossian, have left us of those beautiful figures, that appeared sometime on the hills, are elegant and picturesque. They compare them to the *rain-bow on streams*: or *the gilding of sun-beams on the hills*.

A chief who lived three centuries ago, returning from the war, understood that his wife or mistress was dead. The bard introduces him speaking the following soliloquy, when he came, within sight of the place, where he had left her, at his departure.

“ My soul darkens in sorrow. I behold not the smoke of my hall. No gray dog bounds at my fireams. Silence dwells in the valley of trees.

“ Is that a rain-bow on Crunath? It flies: and the sky is dark. Again, thou movest, bright on the heath, thou sun-beam clothed in a shower! Ha! it is she, my love: her gliding course on the bosom of winds!”

In succeeding times the beauty of Ros-crana passed into a proverb; and the highest compliment, that could be paid to a woman, was to compare her person with *the daughter of Cormac*.

’S tu fein an Ros-crana.

Sio! Chormac na n’ioma lan.

with my people, against the ridgy foe. Alnecma fled.
Colc-ulla fell. Fingal returned with fame.

"He is renowned, O Fillan, who fights, in the strength of his people. The bard pursues his steps, through the land of the foe. But he who fights alone; few are his deeds to other times. He shines, to-day, a mighty light. To-morrow, he is low. One song contains his fame. His name on one dark field. He is forgot, but where his tomb sends forth the tufts of grass."

Such were the words of Fingal, on Mora of the roes. Three bards, from the rock of Cormul, poured down the pleasant song. Sleep descended, in the sound, on the broad-skirted host. Carril returned, with the bards, from the tomb of Dun-lora's king. The voice of morning shall not come, to the dusky bed of the hero. No more shalt thou hear the tread of roes, around thy narrow house.

As roll the troubled clouds, round a meteor of night, when they brighten their sides, with its light, along the heaving sea: so gathered Erin, around the gleaming form of Atha's king. He, tall in the midst, careless lifts, at times, his spear: as swells or falls the sound of Fonar's distant harp. Near* him

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leaned,

* In order to illustrate this passage, I shall give, here, the history on which it is founded, as I have gathered it from other poems. The nation of the Fir-bolg who inhabited the south of Ireland, being originally descended from the Belgæ, who possessed the south and south-west coast of Britain, kept up, for many ages, an amicable correspondence with their mother-country; and sent aid to the British Belgæ, when they were pressed by the Romans or other new-comers from the continent. Con-mor, king of Inis-huna, (that part of South-Britain which is over against the Irish coast) being attacked, by what enemy is not mentioned; sent for aid to Cairbar, lord of Atha, the most potent chief of the Fir-bolg. Cairbar dispatched his brother Cathmor to the assistance of Conmor. Cathmor,
after

leaned, against a rock, Sul-malla* of blue eyes, the white-bosomed daughter of Conmor king of Inis-huna. To his aid came blue-shielded Cathmor, and rolled his foes away. Sul-malla beheld him stately in the hall of feasts; nor careless rolled the eyes of Cathmor on the long-haired maid.

The third day arose, and Fithil† came from Erin of the streams. He told of the lifting up of the shield‡ on Morven, and the danger of red haired Cairbar.

after various vicissitudes of fortune, put an end to the war, by the total defeat of the enemies of Inis-huna, and returned in triumph to the residence of Conmor. There, at a feast, Sul-malla, the daughter of Conmor, fell desperately in love with Cathmor, who, before her passion was disclosed, was recalled to Ireland by his brother Cairbar, upon the news of the intended expedition of Fingal, to re-establish the family of Conar on the Irish throne. The wind being contrary, Cathmor remained, for three days, in a neighbouring bay, during which time Sul-malla disguised herself, in the habit of a young warrior, and came to offer him her service, in the war. Cathmor accepted of the proposal, sailed for Ireland, and arrived in Ulster a few days before the death of Cairbar.

* Sul-malla, *slowly rolling eyes*. Caon-mor, *mild and tall*. Inis-huna, *green island*.

† Fithil, *an inferior bard*. It may either be taken here for the proper name of a man, or in the literal sense, as the bards were the heralds and messengers of those times. Cathmor, it is probable, was absent, when the rebellion of his brother Cairbar, and the assassination of Cormac, king of Ireland, happened. The traditions, which are handed down with the poem, say that Cathmor and his followers had only arrived, from Inis-huna, three days before the death of Cairbar, which sufficiently clears his character from any imputation of being concerned in the conspiracy, with his brother.

‡ The ceremony which was used by Fingal, when he prepared for an expedition, is related, by Ossian, in one of his lesser poems. A bard, at midnight, went to the hall,

Cairbar. Cathmor raised the sail at Cluba; but the winds were in other lands. Three days he remained on the coast, and turned his eyes on Connor's halls. He remembered the daughter of strangers, and his sigh arose. Now when the winds awaked the wave: from the hill came a youth in arms; to lift the sword with Cathmor in his echoing field. It was the white-armed Sul-malla: secret she dwelt beneath her helmet. Her steps were in the path of the king; on him her blue eyes rolled with joy, when he lay by his roaring streams. But Cathmor thought, that, on Lumon, she still pursued the roes: or fair on a rock, stretched her white hand to the wind; to feel its course from Inis-sail the green dwelling of her love. He had promised to return, with his white-bosomed sails. The maid is near thee, king of Atha, leaning on her rock.

The tall forms of the chiefs stood around: all but dark-browed Foldath*. He stood beneath a tree,

F 2

rolled

hall, where the tribes feasted upon solemn occasions, raised the *war-song*, and thrice called the spirits of their deceased-ancestors to come, *on their clouds*, to behold the actions of their children. He then fixed the *shield of Trenmor*, on a tree on the rock of Selma, striking it, at times, with the blunt end of a spear, and singing the war-song between. Thus he did, for three successive nights, and in the mean time, messengers were dispatched to convene the tribes; or, as Ossian expresses it, *to call them from all their streams*. This phrase alludes to the situation of the residences of the clans, which were generally fixed in valleys, where the torrents of the neighbouring mountains were collected into one body, and became *large streams* or rivers. *The lifting up of the shield*, was the phrase for beginning a war.

* The surly attitude of Foldath is a proper preamble to his after behaviour. Chastened with the disappointment of the victory which he promised himself, he becomes passionate and over-bearing. The quarrel which succeeds between him

rolled into his haughty soul. His bushy hair whistles in wind. At times, bursts the hum of a song. He struck the tree, at length, in wrath; and rushed before the king. Calm and stately, to the beam of the oak, arose the form of young Hidalla. His hair falls round his blushing cheek, in wreaths of waving light. Soft was his voice in Clon-ra*, in the valley of his fathers; when he touched the harp, in the hall, near his roaring streams.

“King of Erin,” said the youth, “now is the time of feasts. Bid the voice of bards arise, and roll the night away. The soul returns, from song, more terrible to war. Darkness settles on Inis-fail: from hill to hill bend the skirted clouds. Far and gray, on the heath, the dreadful strides of ghosts are seen: the ghosts of those who fell bend forward to their song. Bid thou the harps to rise, and brighten the dead, on their wandering blasts.”

“Be all the dead forgot,” said Foldath’s bursting wrath. “Did not I fail in the field, and shall I hear the song? Yet was not my course harmless in battle: blood was a stream around my steps. But the feeble were behind me, and the foe has escaped my sword. In Clon-ra’s vale touch thou the harp; let Dura answer to thy voice; while some maid looks, from the wood, on thy long, yellow locks. Fly from Lubar’s echoing plain; it is the field of heroes.”

“King of Temora †,” Malthos said, “it is thine to lead in war. Thou art a fire to our eyes, on the dark-brown field. Like a blast thou hast past over hosts,

him and Malthos was, no doubt, introduced by the poet, to raise the character of Cathmor whose superior worth shines forth, in his manly manner of ending the difference between the chiefs.

* Claon-rath, *winding field*. The *tb* are seldom pronounced audibly in the Galic language.

† This speech of Malthos is, throughout, a severe reprimand to the blustering behaviour of Foldath.

hosts, and laid them low in blood; but who has heard thy words returning from the field? The wrathful delight in death: their remembrance rests on the wounds of their spear. Strife is folded in their thoughts: their words are ever heard. Thy course, chief of Moma, was like a troubled stream. The dead were rolled on thy path: but others also lift the spear. We were not feeble behind thee, but the foe was strong."

The king beheld the rising rage, and bending forward of either chief: for half-unsheathed, they held their swords, and rolled their silent eyes. Now would they have mixed in horrid fray, had not the wrath of Cathmor burned. He drew his sword: it gleamed through night, to the high-flaming oak. "Sons of pride," said the king, "allay your swelling souls. Retire in night. Why should my rage arise? Should I contend with both in arms? It is no time for strife. Retire, ye clouds at my feast. Awake my soul no more.

They sunk from the king on either side; like* two columns of morning mist, when the sun rises, between them, on his glittering rocks. Dark is their rolling on either side; each towards its reedy pool.

Silent sat the chiefs at the feast. They looked, at times, on Atha's king, where he strode, on his rock, amidst his settling soul. The host lay, at length, on

F 3

the

* The poet could scarcely find, in all nature, a comparison so favourable as this to the superiority of Cathmor over his two chiefs. I shall illustrate this passage with another from a fragment of an ancient poem, just now in my hands. "As the sun is above the vapours, which his beams have raised; so is the soul of the king above the sons of fear. They roll dark below him; he rejoices in the robe of his beams. But when feeble deeds wander on the soul of the king, he is a darkened sun rolled along the sky; the valley is sad below: flowers wither beneath the drops of the night."

the field: sleep descended on Moi-lena. The voice of Fonar rose alone, beneath his distant tree. It rose in the praise of Cathmor son of Larthon* of Lumon. But Cathmor did not hear his praise. He lay at the roar of a stream. The rustling breeze of night flew over his whistling locks.

Cairbar came to his dreams, half-seen from his low-hung cloud. Joy rose darkly in his face: he had heard the song of Carril †. A blast sustained his dark-

* Lear-thon, *sea-wave*, the name of the chief of that colony of the Fir-bolg, which first migrated into Ireland. Larthon's first settlement in that country is related in the seventh book. He was the ancestor of Cathmor; and is here called *Larthon of Lumon*, from a high hill of that name in Inis-huna, the ancient seat of the Fir-bolg. The poet preserves the character of Cathmor throughout. He had mentioned, in the first book, the aversion of that chief to praise, and we find him here lying at the side of a stream, that the noise of it might drown the voice of Fonar, who, according to the custom of the times, sung his eulogium in his *evening song*. Though other chiefs, as well as Cathmor, might be averse to hear their own praise, we find it the universal policy of the times, to allow the lords to be as extravagant as they pleased in their encomiums on the leaders of armies, in the presence of their people. The vulgar, who had no great ability to judge for themselves, received the characters of their princes, entirely upon the faith of the bards.

† Carril, the son of Kinsena, by the orders of Ossian, sung the funeral elegy at the tomb of Cairbar. See the second book, towards the end. In all the poems of Ossian, the visit of ghosts, to their living friends, are short, and their language obscure, both which circumstances tend to throw a solemn gloom on these supernatural scenes. Towards the latter end of the speech of the ghost of Cairbar, he foretells the death of Cathmor, by enumerating those signals which, according to the opinion of the times, preceded the death of a person renowned. It was thought that the ghosts of deceased bards sung, for three nights preceding

dark-skirted cloud ; which he seized in the bosom of night, as he rose, with his fame, towards his airy hall. Half-mixed with the noise of the stream, he poured his feeble words.

“ Joy meet the soul of Cathmor : his voice was heard on *Moi-lena*. The bard gave his song to *Cairbar* : he travels on the wind. My form is in my father’s hall, like the gliding of a terrible light, which winds through the desert, in a stormy night. No bard shall be wanting at thy tomb, when thou art lowly laid. The sons of song love the valiant. Cathmor, thy name is a pleasant gale. The mournful sounds arise ! On *Lubar’s* field there is a voice ! Louder still ye shadowy ghosts ! the dead were full of fame. Shrilly swells the feeble sound. The rougher blast alone is heard ! Ah, soon is Cathmor low !” Rolled into himself he flew, wide on the bosom of his blast. The old oak felt his departure, and shook its whistling head. The king started from rest, and took his deathful spear. He lifts his eyes around. He sees but dark-skirted night.

“ It* was the voice of the king ; but now his form is gone. Unmarked is your path in the air, ye children of the night. Often, like a reflected beam, are ye seen in the desert wild ; but ye retire in your blasts before our steps approach. Go then, ye feeble race ! knowledge with you there is none. Your joys are weak, and like the dreams of our rest, or the light-

preceding the death (near the place where his tomb was to be raised) round an unsubstantial figure which represented the body of the person who was to die.

* The soliloquy of Cathmor abounds with that magnanimity and love of fame which constitute the hero. Though staggered at first with the prediction of *Cairbar’s* ghost, he soon comforts himself with the agreeable prospect of his future renown ; and like *Achilles*, prefers a short and glorious life, to an obscure length of years in retirement and ease.

light-winged thought that flies across the soul. Shall Cathmor soon be low? Darkly laid in his narrow house? where no morning comes with her half-opened eyes. Away, thou shade! to fight is mine, all further thought away! I rush forth, on eagle wings, to seize my beam of fame. In the lonely vale of streams, abides the little * soul. Years roll on, seasons return, but he is still unknown. In a blast comes cloudy death, and lays his gray head low. His ghost is rolled on the vapour of the fenny field. Its course is never on hills, or mossy vales of wind. So shall not Cathmor depart, no boy in the field was he, who only marks the bed of roes, upon the
echoing

* From this passage we learn in what extreme contempt an indolent and unwarlike life was held in those days of heroism. Whatever a philosopher may say, in praise of quiet and retirement, I am far from thinking, but they weaken and debase the human mind. When the faculties of the soul are not exerted, they lose their vigour, and low and circumscribed notions take the place of noble and enlarged ideas. Action, on the contrary, and the vicissitudes of fortune which attend it, call forth, by turns, all the powers of the mind, and, by exercising, strengthen them. Hence it is, that in great and opulent states, when property and indolence are secured to individuals, we seldom meet with that strength of mind which is so common in a nation, not far advanced in civilization. It is a curious, but just observation; that great kingdoms seldom produce great characters, which must be altogether attributed to that indolence and dissipation, which are the insuperable companions of too much property and security. Rome, it is certain, had more real great men within it, when its power was confined within the narrow bounds of Latium, than when its dominion extended over all the known world; and one petty state of the Saxon heptarchy had, perhaps, as much genuine spirit in it, as the two British kingdoms united. As a state, we are much more powerful than our ancestors, but we would lose by comparing individuals with them.

echoing hills. My issuing forth was with kings, and my joy in dreadful plains : where broken hosts are away, like seas before the wind."

So spoke the king of Alnecma, brightening in his rising soul : valour, like a pleasant flame, is gleaming within his breast. Stately is his stride on the heath : the beam of east is poured around. He saw his gray host on the field, wide-spreading their ridges in light. He rejoiced, like a spirit of heaven, whose steps come forth on his seas, when he beholds them peaceful round, and all the winds are laid. But soon he awakes the waves, and rolls them large to some echoing coast.

On the rushy bank of a stream, slept the daughter of Inis-huna. The helmet had fallen from her head. Her dreams were in the lands of her fathers. There morning was on the field : gray streams leapt down from the rocks ; the breezes, in shadowy waves, fly over the rushy fields. There is the sound that prepares for the chase ; and the moving of warriors from the hall. But tall above the rest is the hero of streamy Atha : he bends his eye of love on Sul-malla, from his stately steps. She turns, with pride, her face away, and careless bends the bow.

Such were the dreams of the maid when Atha's warrior came. He saw her fair face before him, in the midst of her wandering locks. He knew the maid of Lumon. What should Cathmor do ? His sigh arose : his tears came down. But straight he turned away. " This is no time, king of Atha, to wake thy secret soul. The battle is rolled before thee, like a troubled stream."

He struck that warning boss*, wherein dwelt the voice of war. Erin rose around him like the sound
of

* In order to understand this passage, it is necessary to look to the description of Cathmor's shield which the poet has given us in the seventh book. This shield had seven principal

of eagle-wings, Sul-malla started from sleep, in her disordered locks. She seized the helmet from earth, and trembled in her place. "Why should they know in Erin of the daughter of Inis-huna?" for she remembered the race of kings, and the pride of her soul arose. Her steps are behind a rock, by the blue-winding stream* of a vale: where dwelt the dark-brown hind ere yet the war arose. Thither came the voice of Cathmor, at times, to Sul-malla's ear. Her soul is darkly sad; she pours her words on wind.

"The dreams of Inis-huna departed: they are rolled away from my soul. I hear not the chase in my land. I am concealed in the skirts of war. I look forth from my cloud, but no beam appears to light my path. I behold my warrior low; for the broad-shielded king is near; he that overcomes in danger; Fingal of the spears. Spirit of departed Conmor, are thy steps on the bosom of winds? Comest thou, at times, to other lands, father of sad Sul-malla! Thou dost come, for I have heard thy voice at night; while yet I rose on the wave to streamy Inis-fail. The ghost of fathers, they say †, can

principal bosses, the sound of each of which, when struck with a spear, conveyed a particular order from the king to his tribes. The sound of one of them, as here, was the signal for the army to assemble.

* This was not the valley of Lona to which Sul-malla afterwards retired.

† Con-mor, the father of Sul-malla, was killed in that war, from which Cathmor delivered Inis-huna. Lormar his son succeeded Conmor. It was the opinion of the times, when a person was reduced to a pitch of misery, which could admit of no alleviation, that the ghosts of his ancestors *called his soul away*. This supernatural kind of death was called *the voice of the dead*; and is believed by the superstitious vulgar to this day.

There is no people in the world, perhaps, who gave more universal credit to apparitions, and the visits of the ghosts

can seize the souls of their race, while they behold them lonely in the midst of woe. Call me, my father, when the king is low on earth; for then I shall be lonely in the midst of woe."

TEMORA:

ghosts of the deceased to their friends, than the common highlanders. This is to be attributed as much, at least, to the situation of the country they possess, as to that credulous disposition which distinguishes an unenlightened people. As their business was feeding of cattle, in dark and extensive deserts, so their journeys lay over wide and unfrequented heaths, where, often, they were obliged to sleep in the open air, amidst the whistling of winds, and roar of water-falls. The gloominess of the scenes around them was apt to beget that melancholy disposition of mind, which most readily receives impressions of the extraordinary and supernatural kind. Falling asleep in this gloomy mood, and their dreams being disturbed by the noise of the elements around, it is no matter of wonder, that they thought they heard the *voice of the dead*. This *voice of the dead*, however, was, perhaps, no more than a shriller whistle of the winds in an old tree, or in the chinks of a neighbouring rock. It is to this cause I ascribe those many and improbable tales of ghosts, which we meet with in the highlands: for, in other respects, we do not find that the highlanders are more credulous than their neighbours.

T E M O R A :

AN

E P I C P O E M.

THE ARGUMENT.

Offian, after a short address to the harp of Cona, describes the arrangement of both armies on either side of the river Lubar. Fingal gives the command to Fillan: but, at the same time, orders Gaul, the son of Morni, who had been wounded in the hand in the preceding battle, to assist him with his counsel. The army of the Fir-bolg is commanded by Foldath. The general onset is described. The great actions of Fillan. He kills Rothmar and Culmin. But when Fingal conquers, in one wing. Foldath presses hard on the other. He wounds Dermid, the son of Dothno, and puts the whole wing to flight. Dermid deliberates with himself, and, at last, resolves to put a stop to the progress of Foldath, by engaging him in single combat. When the two chiefs were approaching towards one another, Fillan came suddenly to the relief of Dermid; engaged Foldath, and killed him. The behaviour of Malthos towards the fallen Foldath. Fillan puts the whole army of the Fir-bolg to flight. The book closes with an address to Clatho, the mother of that hero.

BOOK V.

THOU dweller between the shields that hang on high in Offian's hall, descend from thy place, O harp, and let me hear thy voice. Son of Alpin, strike the string; thou must awake the soul of the bard. The murmur of Lora's* stream has rolled the tale away. I stand in the cloud of years: few
VOL. II. G are

* Lora is often mentioned; it was a small and rapid stream in the neighbourhood of Selma. There is no vestige of this name now remaining; though it appears from a very old song, which the translator has seen, that one of the small rivers on the north-west coast was called Lora some centuries ago.

are its openings towards the past, and when the vision comes it is but dim and dark. I hear thee, harp of Cona; my soul returns, like a breeze, which the sun brings back to the vale, where dwelt the lazy mist.

Lubar* is bright before me, in the windings of its vale. On either side, on their hills, rise the tall forms of the kings; their people are poured around them, bending forward to their words; as if their fathers spoke, descending from their winds. But the kings were like two rocks in the midst, each with its dark head of pines, when they are seen in the desert, above low-falling mist. High on their face are streams, which spread their foam on blasts.

Beneath the voice of Cathmor poured Erin, like the sound of flame. Wide they came down to Lubar; before them is the stride of Foldath. But Cathmor retired to his hill, beneath his bending oaks. The tumbling of a stream is near the king: he lifts, at times, his gleaming spear. It was a flame to his people, in the midst of war. Near him stood the daughter

* From several passages in the poem, we may form a distinct idea of the scene of the action of Temora. At a small distance from one another rose the hills of Mora and Lona: the first possessed by Fingal, the second by the army of Cathmor. Through the intermediate plain ran the small river Lubar, on the banks of which all the battles were fought, excepting that between Cairbar and Osear, related in the first book. This last mentioned engagement happened, to the north of the hill of Mora, of which Fingal took possession, after the army of Cairbar fell back to that of Cathmor. At some distance, but within sight of Mora, towards the west, Lubar issued from the mountain of Crommal, and after a short course through the plain of Moi-lena, discharged itself into the sea near the field of battle. Behind the mountain of Crommal ran the small stream of Levath, on the banks of which Ferad-artho, the son of Cairbre, the only person remaining of the race of Conar, lived concealed in a cave, during the usurpation of Cairbar, the son of Borbar-duthul.

daughter of Con-mor, leaning on her rock. She did not rejoice over the strife: her soul delighted not in blood. A valley * spreads green behind the hill, with its three blue streams. The sun is there in silence; and the dun mountain-roes come down. On these are turned the eyes of Inis-huna's white-bosomed maid.

Fingal beheld, on high, the son of Borbar-duthul: he saw the deep rolling of Erin, on the darkened plain. He struck that warning boss, which bids the people obey; when he sends his chiefs before them, to the field of renown. Wide rose their spears to the sun; their echoing shields reply around. Fear, like a vapor, did not wind among the host: for he, the king, was near, the strength of streamy Morven. Gladness brightened the hero, we heard his words of joy.

"Like the coming forth of winds, is the sound of Morven's sons! They are mountain waters, determined in their course. Hence is Fingal renowned, and his name in other lands. He was not a lonely beam in danger; for your steps were always near. But never was I a dreadful form, in your presence, darkened into wrath. My voice was no thunder to your ears: mine eyes sent forth no death. When the haughty appeared, I beheld them not. They were forgot at my feasts: like mist they melted away. A young beam is before you: few are his paths to war. They are few, but he is valiant: defend my dark-haired son. Bring him back with joy: Hereafter he may stand alone. His form is like his fathers: his soul is a flame of their fire. Son of car-borne Morni, move behind the son of Clatho: let thy voice reach his ear, from the skirts of war. Not

G 2

unobserved

* It was to this valley Sul-malla retired, during the last and decisive battle between Fingal and Cathmor. It is described in the seventh book, where it is called the vale of Lona, and the residence of a Druid.

unobserved rolls battle, beſ re thee, breaker of the ſhields.”

The king ſtrode, at once, away to Cormul’s lofty rock. As, ſlow, I liſted my ſteps behind; came forward the ſtrength of Gaul. His ſhield hung looſe on its thong; he ſpoke, in haſte, to Oſſian. “Bind*, ſon of Fingal, this ſhield, bind it high to the ſide of Gaul. The foe may behold it, and think I left the ſpear. If I ſhall fall, let my tomb be hid in the field; for fall I muſt without my fame: mine arm cannot liſt the ſteel. Let not Eir-choma hear it, to bluſh between her locks. Fillan the mighty behold us; let us not forget the ſtrife. Why ſhould they come, from their hills, to aid our flying field?”

He ſtrode onward, with the ſound of his ſhield. My voice purſued him, as he went. “Can the ſon of Morni fall without his fame in Erin? But the deeds of the mighty forſake their ſouls of fire. They ruſh careleſs o’er the fields of renown: their words are never heard.” I rejoiced over the ſteps of the chief: I ſtrode to the rock of the king, where he ſat in his wandering locks, amidſt the mountain-wind.

In two dark ridges bend the hoſts, towards each other, at Lubar. Here Foldath roſe a pillar of darkneſs: there brightened the youth of Fillan. Each, with his ſpear in the ſtream, ſent forth the voice of war. Gaul ſtruck the ſhield of Morven: at once they plunge in battle. Steel poured its gleam on ſteel: like the fall of ſtreams ſhone the field, when they mix their foam together, from two dark-browed rocks. Behold he comes the ſon of fame: he lays the people low! Death ſits on blaſts around him! Warriors ſtrew thy paths, O Fillan!

Rothmar

* It is neceſſary to remember, that Gaul was wounded; which occasions his requiring here the aſſiſtance of Oſſian to bind his ſhield on his ſide.

Rothmar*, the shield of warriors, stood between two chinky rocks. Two oaks, which winds had bent from high, spread their branches on either side. He rolls his darkening eyes on Fillan, and silent, shades his friends. Fingal saw the approaching fight; and all his soul arose. But as the stone of Loda † falls, shook, at once, from rocking Druman-ard, when spirits heave the earth in their wrath; so fell blue-shielded Rothmar.

Near are the steps of Culmin; the youth came bursting into tears. Wrathful he cut the wind, ere yet he mixed his strokes with Fillan. He had first bent the bow with Rothmar, at the rock of his own blue streams. There they had marked the place of the roe, as the sun-beam flew over the fern. Why,

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fon

* Roth-mar, *the sound of the sea before a storm*.
Drumanard, *high ridge*. Culmin, *soft-haired*. Cull-
allin, *beautiful locks*. Strutha, *streamy river*.

† By the stone of Loda, as I have remarked in my notes on some other poems of Ossian, is meant a place of worship among the Scandinavians. Ossian, in his many expeditions to Orkney and Scandinavia, became acquainted with some of the rites of the religion which prevailed in those countries, and frequently alludes to them in his poems. There are some ruins, and circular pales of stone, remaining still in Orkney, and the islands of Shetland, which retain, to this day, the name of *Loda* or *Loden*. They seem to have differed materially, in their construction, from those Druidical monuments which remain in Britain, and the western isles. The places of worship among the Scandinavians were originally rude and unadorned. In after ages, when they opened a communication with other nations, they adopted their manners, and built temples. That at Upsal, in Sweden, was amazingly rich and magnificent. Haquin, of Norway, built one, near Drontheim, little inferior to the former; and it went always under the name of *Loden*. *Mallet, introduction à l'histoire de Dannemarck.*

son of Cul-allin, dost thou rush on that beam * of light? it is a fire that consumes. Youth of Strutha retire. Your fathers were not equal, in the glittering strife of the field.

The mother of Culmin remains in the hall; she looks forth on blue-rolling Strutha. A whirlwind rises, on the stream, dark-eddying round the ghost of her son. His dogs† are howling in their place: his shield is bloody in the hall. “Art thou fallen, my fair haired son, in Erin’s dismal war?”

As a roe, pierced in secret, lies panting, by her wonted streams, the hunter looks over her feet of wind, and remembers her stately bounding before: so lay the son of Cul-allin, beneath the eye of Fillan. His hair is rolled in a little stream: his blood wandered on his shield. Still his hand held the sword, that failed him in the day of his danger. “Thou
art

* The poet, metaphorically, calls Fillan a beam of light. Culmin, mentioned here, was the son of Clonmar, chief of Strutha, by the beautiful Cul-allin. She was so remarkable for the beauty of her person, that she is introduced, frequently, in the families and allusions of ancient poetry. *Mar Ckul-aluin Strutha nan fian*; is a line of Ossian in another poem; i. e. *Lovely as Cul-allin of Strutha of the streams.*

† Dogs were thought to be sensible of the death of their master; let it happen at ever so great a distance. It was also the opinion of the times, that the arms which warriors left at home became bloody, when they themselves fell in battle. It was from those signs that Cul-allin is supposed to understand that her son is killed; in which she is confirmed by the appearance of his ghost. Her sudden and short exclamation, on the occasion, is more affecting than if she had extended her complaints to a greater length. The attitude of the fallen youth, and Fillan’s reflections over him, are natural and judicious, and come forcibly back on the mind when we consider, that the supposed situation of the father of Culmin, was so similar to that of Fingal, after the death of Fillan himself.

art fallen," said Fillan, "ere yet thy fame was heard. Thy father sent thee to war: and he expects to hear thy deeds. He is gray, perhaps, at his streams, turning his dim eyes towards Moi-lena. But thou shalt not return, with the spoil of the fallen foe."

Fillan poured the flight of Erin before him, over the echoing heath. But, man on man, fell Morven before the dark-red rage of Foldath; for, far on the field, he poured the roar of half his tribes. Dermid stood before him in wrath: the sons of Cona gather round. But his shield is cleft by Foldath, and his people poured over the heath.

Then said the foe in his pride, "They have fled, and my fame begins. Go, Malthos, and bid the king to guard the dark-rolling of ocean; that Fingal may not escape from my sword. He must lie on earth. Beside some fen shall his tomb be seen. It shall rise without a song. His ghost shall hover in mist over the reedy pool."

Malthos heard, with darkening doubt; he rolled his silent eyes. He knew the pride of Foldath, and looked up to the king on his hill; then, darkly turning, he plunged his sword in war.

In Clono's* narrow vale, were bent two trees above the streams, dark in his grief stood Duthno's silent

* This valley had its name from Clono, son of Lethmal of Lora, one of the ancestors of Dermid, the son of Duthno. His history is thus related in an old poem. In the days of Conar, the son of Trenmor, the first king of Ireland, Clono passed over into that kingdom from Caledonia, to aid Conar against the Fir-bolg. Being remarkable for the beauty of his person, he soon drew the attention of Sulmin, the young wife of an Irish chief. She disclosed her passion, which was not properly returned by the Caledonian. The lady sickened, through disappointment, and her love for Clono came to the ears of her husband. Fired with jealousy, he vowed revenge. Clono, to avoid his rage, departed from Temora, in order to pass over

silent son. The blood poured from his thigh: his shield lay broken near. His spear leaned against a stone; why, Dermid, why so sad? "I hear the roar of battle. My people are alone. My steps are slow on the heath; and no shield is mine. Shall he then prevail? It is then after Dermid is low! I will call thee forth, O Foldath, and meet thee yet in fight."

He took his spear, with dreadful joy, The son of Morni came. "Stay, son of Duthno, stay thy speed; thy steps are marked with blood. No bossy shield is thine. Why shouldst thou fall unarmed?" King of Strumon, give thou thy shield. It has often rolled back the war. I shall stop the chief, in his

over into Scotland; and being benighted in the valley mentioned here, he laid him down to sleep. *There, Lethmal descended in the dreams of Clono; and told him that danger was near.*

Ghost of Lethmal. "Arise from thy bed of moss; son of low-laid Lethmal, arise. The sound of the coming of foes, descends along the wind."

Clono. Whose voice is that, like many streams, in the season of my rest?

Ghost of Lethmal. Arise, thou dweller of the souls of the lovely; son of Lethmal, arise.

Clono. How dreary is the night! The moon is darkened in the sky; red are the paths of ghosts, along its fullen face! Green-skirted meteors set around. Dull is the roaring of streams, from the valley of dim forms. I hear thee, spirit of my father, on the eddying course of the wind. I hear thee, but thou bendest not, forward, thy tall form, from the skirts of night."

As Clono prepared to depart, the husband of Sulmin came up, with his numerous attendants. Clono defended himself, but, after a gallant resistance, he was overpowered and slain. He was buried in the place where he was killed, and the valley was called after his name. Dermid, in his request to Gaul the son of Morni, which immediately follows this paragraph, alludes to the tomb of Clono, and his own connection with that unfortunate chief.

his course. Son of Morni, dost thou behold that stone? It lifts its gray head through grass. There dwells a chief of the race of Dermid. Place me there in night."

He slowly rose against the hill, and saw the troubled field. The gleaming ridges of the fight, disjoined and broken round. As distant fires, on heath by night, now seem as lost in smoke, then rearing their red streams on the hill, as blow or cease the winds: so met the intermitting war the eye of broad-shielded Dermid. Through the host are the strides of Foldath, like some dark ship on wintry waves, when it issues from between two isles, to sport on echoing seas.

Dermid, with rage, beheld his course. He strove to rush along. But he failed in the midst of his steps; and the big tear came down. He sounded his father's horn; and thrice struck his bossy shield. He called thrice the name of Foldath, from his roaring tribes. Foldath, with joy, beheld the chief: he lifted high his bloody spear. As a rock is marked with streams, that fell troubled down its side in a storm; so, streaked with wandering blood, is the dark form of Moma. The host, on either side, withdrew from the contending of kings. They raised, at once, their gleaming points. Rushing came Fillan of Moruth. Three paces back Foldath withdrew; dazzled with that beam of light, which came, as issuing from a cloud, to save the wounded hero. Growing in his pride he stood, and called forth all his steel.

As meet two broad-winged eagles, in their sounding strife, on the winds: so rushed the two chiefs, on Moi-lena, into gloomy fight. By turns are the steps of the kings* forward on their rocks; for now the dusky war seems to descend on their swords. Cathmor feels the joy of warriors, on his mossy hill: their joy in secret when dangers rise equal to their souls.

* Fingal and Cathmor.

fouls. His eye is not turned on Lubar, but on Morven's dreadful king; for he beheld him, on Mora, rising in his arms.

Foldath* fell on his shield; the spear of Fillan pierced the king. Nor looked the youth on the fallen, but onward rolled the war. The hundred voices.

* The fall of Foldath, if we may believe tradition, was predicted to him, before he had left his own country to join Cairbar, in his designs on the Irish throne. He went to the cave of Moma, to inquire of the spirits of his fathers, concerning the success of the enterprise of Cairbar. The responses of oracles are always attended with obscurity, and liable to a double meaning: Foldath, therefore, put a favourable interpretation on the prediction, and pursued his adopted plan of aggrandizing himself with the family of Atha, I shall, here, translate the answer of *the ghosts of his ancestors*, as it was handed down by tradition. Whether the legend is really ancient, or the invention of a late age, I shall not pretend to determine, though, from the phraseology, I should suspect the last.

FOLDATH, *addressing the spirits of his fathers.*

Dark, I stand in your presence; fathers of Foldath, hear. Shall my steps pass over Atha, to Ullin of the roes?

The Answer.

Thy steps shall pass over Atha, to the green dwelling of kings. There shall thy stature arise, over the fallen, like a pillar of thunder-clouds. There, terrible in darkness, shalt thou stand, till the *reflected beam*, or *Clon-cath* of Moruth, come; Moruth of many streams, that roars in distant lands."

Cloncath, or *reflected beam*, say my traditional authors, was the name of the sword of Fillan; so that it was, in the latent signification of the word *Clon-cath*, that the deception lay. My principal reason for introducing this note, is, that if this tradition is equally ancient with the poem, which, by the bye, is doubtful, it serves to shew, that the religion of the Fir-bolg differed from that of the Caledonians, as we never find the latter enquiring of the spirits of their deceased ancestors.

voices of death arose. "Stay, son of Fingal, stay thy speed. Beholdest thou not that gleaming form, a dreadful sign of death? Awaken not the king of Alnecma. Return, son of blue-eyed Clatho."

Malthos* saw Foldath low. He darkly stood above the king. Hatred was rolled from his soul. He seemed a rock in the desert, on whose dark side are the trickling of waters, when the slow-falling mist has left it, and its trees are blasted with winds. He spoke to the dying hero, about the narrow house. Whether shall thy gray stone rise in Ullin? or in Moma's † woody land, where the sun looks, in secret, on the blue streams of Dalrutho ‡? There are the steps of thy daughter, blue-eyed Dardu-lena.

"Rememberest thou her," said Foldath, "because no son is mine; no youth to roll the battle before

* The characters of Foldath and Malthos are well sustained. They were both dark and furl, but each in a different way. Foldath was impetuous and cruel. Malthos stubborn and incredulous. Their attachment to the family of Atha was equal; their bravery in battle the same. Foldath was vain and ostentatious: Malthos unindulgent but generous. His behaviour here, towards his enemy Foldath, shews, that a good heart often lies concealed under a gloomy and sullen character.

† Moma was the name of a country in the south of Connaught, once famous for being the residence of an Arch-druid. The cave of Moma was thought to be inhabited by the spirits of the chiefs of the Fir-bolg, and their posterity sent to enquire there, as to an oracle, concerning the issue of their wars.

‡ Dal-ruath, *parched or sandy field*. The etymology of Dardu-lena is uncertain. The daughter of Foldath was, probably, so called, from a place in Ulster, where her father had defeated part of the adherents of Artho, king of Ireland. Dordu-lena; *the dark wood of Moi-lena*. As Foldath was proud and ostentatious, it would appear, that he transferred the name of a place, where he himself had been victorious, to his daughter.

before him, in revenge of me? Malthos, I am revenged. I was not peaceful in the field. Raise the tombs of those I have slain, around my narrow house. Often shall I forsake the blast, to rejoice above their graves; when I behold them spread around, with their long-whistling grass."

His soul rushed to the vales of Moma, and came to Dardu-lena's dreams, where she slept, by Dal-rutho's stream, returning from the chase of the hinds. Her bow is near the maid, unstrung; the breezes fold her long hair on her breasts. Clothed in the beauty of youth, the love of heroes lay. Dark bending, from the skirts of the wood, her wounded father came. He appeared, at times, then seemed as hid in mist. Bursting into tears she rose: she knew that the chief was low. To her came a beam from his soul when folded in its storms. Thou wert the last of his race, blue-eyed Dardu-lena!

Wide-spreading over echoing Lubar, the flight of Bolga is rolled along. Fillan hung forward on their steps; and strewed, with dead, the heath. Fingal rejoiced over his son. Blue-shielded Cathmor rose.

Son * of Alpin, bring the harp: give Fillan's praise to the wind: raise high his praise, in my hall, while yet he shines in war.

Leave

* These sudden transitions from the subject are not uncommon in the compositions of Ossian. That in this place has a peculiar beauty and propriety. The suspense, in which the mind of the reader is left, conveys the idea of Fillan's danger more forcibly home, than any description that the poet could introduce. There is a sort of eloquence, in silence with propriety. A minute detail of the circumstances of an important scene is generally cold and insipid. The human mind, free and fond of thinking for itself, is disgusted to find every thing done by the poet. It is, therefore, his business only to mark the most striking outlines, and to allow the imaginations of his readers to finish the figure for themselves.

The book ends in the afternoon of the third day, from the opening of the poem.

Leave, blue-eyed Clatho, leave thy hall. Behold that éarly beam of thine. The host is withered in its course. No further look—it is dark. Light-trembling from the harp, strike, virgins, strike the sound. No hunter he descends, from the dewy haunt of the bounding roe. He bends not his bow on the wind; or sends his gray arrow abroad.

Deep-folded in red war, the battle rolls against his side. Or, striding midst the ridgy strife, he pours the deaths of thousands forth. Fillan is like a spirit of heaven, that descends from the skirt of his blast. The troubled ocean feels his steps, as he strides from wave to wave. His path kindles behind him; islands shake their heads on the heaving seas.

T E M O R A :

AN

E P I C P O E M.

THE ARGUMENT.

This book opens with a speech of Fingal, who sees Cathmor descending to the assistance of his flying army. The king dispatches Ossian to the relief of Fillan. He himself retires behind the rock of Cormul, to avoid the sight of the engagement between his son and Cathmor. Ossian advances. The descent of Cathmor described. He rallies the army, renews the battle, and, before Ossian could arrive, engages Fillan himself. Upon the approach of Ossian, the combat between the two heroes ceases. Ossian and Cathmor prepare to fight, but night coming on prevents them. Ossian returns to the place where Cathmor and Fillan fought. He finds Fillan mortally wounded, and leaning against a rock. Their discourse. Fillan dies: his body is laid, by Ossian, in a neighbouring cave. The Caledonian army return to Fingal. He questions them about his son, and understanding that he was killed, retires, in silence, to the rock of Cormul. Upon the retreat of the army of Fingal, the Fir-bolg advance. Cathmor finds Bran, one of the dogs of Fingal, lying on the shield of Fillan, before the entrance of the cave, where the body of that hero lay. His reflections thereupon. He returns, in a melancholy mood, to his army. Malthos endeavours to comfort him, by the example of his father Borbar-duthul. Cathmor retires to rest. The song of Sul-malla concludes the book, which ends about the middle of the third night, from the opening of the poem.

BOOK VI.

“CATHMOR rises on his echoing hill! Shall Fingal take the sword of Luno? But what should become of thy fame, son of white-bosomed Clatho? Turn not thine eyes from Fingal, daughter of Inistore. I shall not quench thy early beam; it shines along my soul. But rise, O wood-skirted Mora, rise between the war and me! Why should Fingal behold the strife, lest his dark-haired warrior should fall! Amidst the song, O Carril, pour the

found of the trembling harp: here are the voices of rocks, and bright tumbling of waters. Father of Oscar lift the spear; defend the young in arms. Conceal thy steps from Fillan's eyes. He must not know that I doubt his steel. No cloud of mine shall rise, my son, upon thy soul of fire!"

He sunk behind his rock, amidst the sound of Carril's song. Brightening, in my growing soul, I took the spear of Temora*. I saw, along Moilena, the wild tumbling of battle, the strife of death, in gleaming rows, disjoined and broken round. Fillan is a beam of fire: from wing to wing is his wasteful course. The ridges of war melt before him. They are rolled, in smoke, from the fields.

Now is the coming forth of Cathmor, in the armour of kings! Dark-rolled the eagle's wing above his helmet of fire. Unconcerned are his steps, as if they were to the chase of Atha. He raised, at times, his dreadful voice; Erin, abashed, gathered round. Their souls returned back, like a stream: they wondered at the steps of their fear: for he rose, like the beam of the morning on a haunted heath: the traveller looks back, with bending eye, on the field of dreadful forms. Sudden, from the rock of Moilena, are Sul-malla's trembling steps. An oak took the spear from her hand; half-bent she loosed the lance: but then are her eyes on the king, from amidst her wandering locks. "No friendly strife is before thee: no light contending of bows, as when the youth of Cluba† came forth beneath the eye of Conmor."

As

* The *spear of Temora* was that which Oscar had received, in a present, from Cormac, the son of Artho, king of Ireland. It was of it that Cairbar made the pretext for quarrelling with Oscar, at the feast, in the first book.

† Clu-ba, *winding bay*; an arm of the sea in Inishuna, or the western coast of South-Britain. It was in this bay that Cathmor was wind-bound when Sul-malla came,

As the rock of Runo, which takes the passing clouds for its robe, seems growing, in gathered darkness, over the streamy heath; so seemed the chief of Atha taller, as gathered his people round. As different blasts fly over the sea, each behind its dark-blue wave, so Cathmor's words, on every side, poured his warriors forth. Nor silent on his hill is Fillan; he mixed his words with his echoing shield. An eagle he seemed, with sounding wings, calling the wind to his rock, when he sees the coming forth of the roes, on Lutha's* rushy field.

Now they bent forward in battle: death's hundred voices rose; for the kings, on either side, were like fires on the souls of the people. I bounded along: high rocks and trees rushed tall between the war and me. But I heard the noise of steel, between my clanging arms. Rising, gleaming, on the hill, I beheld the backward steps of hosts: their backward steps, on either side, and wildly looking eyes. The chiefs were met in dreadful fight; the two blue-shielded kings. Tall and dark, through gleams of steel, are seen the striving heroes. I rushed. My fears for Fillan flew, burning across my soul.

I came; nor Cathmor fled; nor yet advanced: he side-long stalked along. An icy rock, cold, tall he seemed. I called forth all my steel. Silent awhile we strode, on either side of a rushing stream: then, sudden turning, all at once, we raised our pointed spears. We raised our spears, but night came down.

H 3

It

came, in the disguise of a young warrior, to accompany him in his voyage to Ireland. Conmor, the father of Sul-malla, as we learn from her soliloquy, at the close of the fourth book, was dead before the departure of his daughter.

* Lutha was the name of a valley in Morven, in the days of Ossian. There dwelt Toscar the son of Conloch, the father of Malvina, who, upon that account, is often called the *maid of Lutha*. Lutha signifies *swift stream*.

It is dark and silent around ; but where the distant steps of hosts are sounding over the heath.

I came to the place where Fillan fought. Nor voice, nor sound is there. A broken helmet lay on earth ; a buckler cleft in twain. " Where, Fillan, where art thou, young chief of echoing Morven ? " He heard me leaning against a rock, which bent its gray head over the stream. He heard ; but sullen, dark he stood. At length I saw the chief.

" Why standest thou, robed in darkness, son of woody Selma ? Bright is thy path, my brother, in this dark-brown field. Long has been thy strife in battle. Now the horn of Fingal is heard. Ascend to the cloud of thy father, to his hill of feasts. In the evening mist he sits, and hears the voice of Car-ril's harp. Carry joy to the aged, young breaker of the shields."

" Can the vanquished carry joy ? Ossian, no shield is mine. It lies broken on the field. The eagle-wing of my helmet is torn. It is when the foes fly before them that fathers delight in their sons. But their sighs burst forth, in secret, when their young warriors yield. No : Fillan will not behold the king. Why should the hero mourn ? "

" Son of blue-eyed Clatho, why dost thou awake my soul ? Wert thou not a burning fire before him ; and shall he not rejoice ! Such fame belonged not to Ossian ; yet was the king still a sun to me. He looked on my steps, with joy ; shadows never rose on his face. Ascend, O Fillan to Mora : his feast is spread in the folds of mist."

" Ossian, give me that broken shield : these feathers that are rolled in the wind. Place them near to Fillan that less of his fame may fall. Ossian, I begin to fail. Lay me in that hollow rock. Raise no stone above : lest one should ask about my fame. I am fallen in the first of my fields : fallen without renown. Let thy voice alone send joy to my flying soul.

soul. Why should the feeble know where dwells the lost beam of Clatho * ?”

“ Is thy spirit on the eddying winds, blue-eyed king of shields ? Joy pursue my hero, through his folded clouds. The forms of thy fathers, O Fillan, bend

* A dialogue between Clatho the mother, and Bos-mina the sister, of that hero.

Clatbo. “ Daughter of Fingal, arise : thou light between thy locks. Lift thy fair head from rest, soft-gliding sun-beam of Selma ! I beheld thy arms, on thy breast, white-tossed amidst thy wandering locks : when the rustling breeze of the morning came from the desert of streams. Hast thou seen thy fathers, Bosmina, descending in thy dreams ? Arise, daughter of Clatho ; dwells there aught of grief in thy soul.

Bos-mina. A thin form passed before me, fading as it flew : like the darkening wave of a breeze, along a field of grass. Descend, from thy wall, O harp, and call back the soul of Bos-mina, it has rolled away, like a stream. I hear thy pleasant sound. I hear thee, O harp, and my voice shall rise.

How often shall ye rush to war, ye dwellers of my soul ? Your paths are distant, kings of men, in Erin of blue streams. Lift thy wing, thou southern breeze, from Clono’s darkening heath : spread the sails of Fingal towards the bays of his land.

But who is that, in his strength, darkening in the presence of war ? His arm stretches to the foe, like the beam of the sickly sun ; when his side is crusted with darkness ; and he rolls his dismal course through the sky. Who is it, but the father of Bos-mina ? Shall he return till danger is past !

Fillan, thou art a beam by his side ; beautiful, but terrible, is thy light. Thy sword is before thee, a blue fire of night. When shalt thou return to thy roes ; to the streams of thy rushy fields ? When shall I behold thee from Mora, while winds strew my long locks on moss ! But shall a young eagle return from the field, where the heroes fall !

Clatbo.

bend to receive their son. I behold the spreading of their fire on Mora? the blue rolling of their misty wreaths. Joy meet thee, my brother. But we are dark and sad. I behold the foe round the aged, and the wasting away of his fame. Thou art left alone in the field, gray-haired king of Selma."

I laid him in the hollow rock, at the roar of the nightly stream. One red star looked in on the hero: winds lift, at times, his locks. I listened: no sound was heard: for the warrior slept. As lightning on a cloud, a thought came rushing over my soul. My eyes rolled in fire: my stride was in the clang of steel. "I will find thee, chief of Atha, in the gathering of thy thousands. Why should that cloud escape, that quenched our early beam? Kindle your meteors, my fathers, to light my daring steps. I will consume in wrath.* Should I not return! the king

Clatbo. Soft, as the song of Loda, is the voice of Selma's maid. Pleasant to the ear of Clatho is the name of the breaker of shields. Behold, the king comes from ocean: the shield of Morven is borne by bards. The foe has fled before him, like the departure of mist. I hear not the sounding wings of my eagle; the rushing forth of the son of Clatho. Thou art dark, O Fingal; shall he not return! * * * *

* Here the sentence is designedly left unfinished by the poet. The sense is, that he was resolved, like a destroying fire, to consume Cathmor, who had killed his brother. In the midst of this resolution, the situation of Fingal suggests itself to him, in a very strong light. He resolves to return to assist the king in prosecuting the war. But then his shame for not defending his brother, recurs to him. He is determined again to go and find out Cathmor. We may consider him, as in the act of advancing towards the enemy, when the horn or Fingal sounded on Mora, and called back his people to his presence. This soliloquy is natural: the resolutions which so suddenly follow one another, are expressive of a mind extremely agitated with
forrow

king is without a son, gray-haired amidst his foes. His arm is not as in the days of old : his fame grows dim in Erin. Let me not behold him from high, laid low in his latter field. But can I return to the king? Will he not ask about his son? "Thou oughtest to defend young Fillan." I will meet the foe. Green Inis-fail, thy sounding tread is pleasant to my ear : I rush on thy ridgy host, to shun the eyes of Fingal. I hear the voice of the king, on Mora's misty top ! He calls his two sons ; I come, my father, in my grief. I come like an eagle, which the flame of night met in the desert, and spoiled off half his wings."

Distant,* round the king, on Mora, the broken ridges of Morven are rolled. They turned their eyes : each darkly bends, on his own ashen spear. Silent stood the king in the midst. Thought on thought rolled over his soul. As waves on a secret mountain lake, each with its back of foam. He looked ; no son appeared, with his long-beaming spear. The sighs rose, crowding from his soul ; but he

forrow and conscious shame ; yet the behaviour of Ossian, in his execution of the commands of Fingal, is so irreprehensible, that it is not easy to determine where he failed in his duty. The truth is, that when men fail in designs which they ardently wish to accomplish, they naturally blame themselves, as the chief cause of their disappointment.

* This scene is solemn. The poet always places his chief character amidst objects which favour the sublime. The face of the country, the night, the broken remains of a defeated army, and, above all, the attitude and silence of Fingal himself, are circumstances calculated to impress an awful idea on the mind. Ossian is most successful in his night descriptions. Dark images suited the melancholy temper of his mind. His poems were all composed after the active part of his life was over, when he was blind, and had survived all the companions of his youth : we therefore find a veil of melancholy thrown over the whole.

he concealed his grief. At length I stood beneath an oak. No voice of mine was heard. What could I say to Fingal in his hour of woe? His words rose, at length, in the midst: the people shrunk backward as he spoke *.

“ Where

* The abashed behaviour of the army of Fingal proceeds rather from shame than fear. The king was not of a tyrannical disposition: *He, as he professes himself in the fifth book, never was a dreadful form, in their presence, darkened into wrath. His voice was no thunder to their ears: his eye sent forth no death.* The first ages of society are not the times of arbitrary power. As the wants of mankind are few, they retain their independence. It is an advanced state of civilization that moulds the mind to that submission to government, of which ambitious magistrates take advantage, and raise themselves into absolute power.

It is a vulgar error, that the common Highlanders lived, in abject slavery, under their chiefs. Their high ideas of, and attachment to, the heads of their families, probably, led the unintelligent into this mistake. When the honour of the tribe was concerned, the commands of the chief were obeyed, without restriction: but, if individuals were oppressed, they threw themselves into the arm of a neighbouring clan, assumed a new name, and were encouraged and protected. The fear of this desertion, no doubt, made the chiefs cautious in their government. As their consequence, in the eyes of others, was in proportion to the number of their people, they took care to avoid every thing that tended to diminish it.

It was but very lately that the authority of the laws extended to the Highlands. Before that time the clans were governed, in civil affairs, not by the verbal commands of the chief, but by what they called *Clecbda*, or the traditional precedents of their ancestors. When differences happened between individuals, some of the oldest men in the tribe were chosen umpires between the parties, to decide according to the *Clecbda*. The chief interposed his authority, and, invariably, enforced the decision. In
their

“ Where is the son of Selma, he who led in war?
 I behold not his steps, among my people, returning
 from the field. Fell the young bounding roe, who
 was so stately on my hills? He fell; for ye are silent.
 The shield of war is broke. Let his armour be near
 to Fingal; and the sword of dark-brown Luno. I am,
 waked on my hills: With morning I descend to war.”

High * on Cormul's rock, an oak flamed to the
 wind. The gray skirts of mist are rolled around;
 thither

their wars, which were frequent, on account of family-feuds, the chief was less reserved in the execution of his authority; and even then he seldom extended it to the taking the life of any of his tribe. No crime was capital except murder; and that was very unfrequent in the highlands. No corporal punishment, of any kind, was inflicted. The memory of an affront of this sort would remain, for ages in a family, and they would seize every opportunity to be revenged, unless it came immediately from the hands of the chief himself; in that case it was taken, rather as a fatherly correction, than a legal punishment for offences.

* This rock of Cormul is often mentioned in the preceding part of the poem. It was on it Fingal and Ossian stood to view the battle. The custom of retiring from the army, on the night prior to their engaging in battle, was universal among the kings of the Caledonians. Trenmor, the most renowned of the ancestors of Fingal, is mentioned as the first who instituted this custom. Succeeding bards attributed it to a hero of a later period. In an old poem, which begins with *Mac-Arcath nan ceud frol*, this custom of retiring from the army, before an engagement, is numbered among the wise institutions of Fergus, the son of Arc or Arcath, the first king of Scots. I shall here translate the passage, in some other note I may, probably, give all that remains of the poem. *Fergus of the hundred streams, son of Arcath who fought of old: thou didst first retire at night; when the foe rolled before thee, in echoing fields. Nor bending in rest is the king: he gathers battles in his soul. Fly, son of the stranger; with morn he shall rush abroad. When, or by whom, this poem was writ is uncertain.*

thither strode the king in his wrath. Distant from the host he always lay, when battle burnt within his soul. On two spears hung his shield on high; the gleaming sign of death; that shield, which he was wont to strike, by night, before he rushed to war. It was then his warriors knew, when the king was to lead in strife; for never was this buckler heard, till Fingal's wrath arose. Unequal were his steps on high, as he shone in the beam of the oak; he was dreadful as the form of the spirit of night, when he clothes, on hills, his wild gestures with mist, and, issuing forth, on the troubled ocean, mounts the car of winds.

Nor settled, from the storm, is Erin's sea of war; they glittered, beneath the moon, and, low-humming, still rolled on the field. Alone are the steps of Cathmor, before them on the heath; he hung forward, with all his arms, on Morven's flying host. Now had he come to the mossy cave, where Fillan lay in night. One tree was bent above the stream, which glittered over the rock. There shone to the moon the broken shield of Clatho's son; and near it, on grass, lay hairy-footed Bran*. He had missed the chief

* This circumstance, concerning Bran, the favourite dog of Fingal, is, perhaps, one of the most affecting passages in the poem. I remember to have met with an old poem, composed long after the time of Ossian, wherein a story of this sort is very happily introduced. In one of the invasions of the Danes, Ullin-clundu, a considerable chief, on the western coast of Scotland, was killed in a rencounter with a flying party of the enemy, who had landed, at no great distance, from the place of his residence. The few followers who attended him were also slain. The young wife of Ullin-clundu, who had not heard of his fall, fearing the worst, on account of his long delay, alarmed the rest of his tribe, who went in search of him along the shore. They did not find him; and the beautiful widow became disconsolate. At length he was discovered, by means of his

chief on Mora, and searched him along the wind. He thought that the blue-eyed hunter slept; he lay upon his shield. No blast came over the heath, unknown to bounding Bran.

Cathmor saw the white-breasted dog; he saw the broken shield. Darkness is blown back on his soul; he remembers the falling away of the people. "They come, a stream; are rolled away; another race succeeds. But some mark the fields, as they pass, with their own mighty names. The heath, through dark-brown years, is theirs; some blue stream, winds to their fame. Of these be the chief of Atha, when he lays him down on earth. Often may the voice of future times meet Cathmor in the air: when he strides from wind to wind, or folds himself in the wing of a storm."

Green Erin gathered round the king, to hear the voice of his power. Their joyful faces bend, unequal, forward, in the light of the oak. They who were terrible were removed: Lubar* winds again in
 VOL. II. I their

his dog, who sat on a rock beside the body, for some days. The poem is not just now in my hands; otherwise its poetical merit might induce me to present the reader with a translation of it. The stanza concerning the dog, whose name was Du-chos, or *Blackfoot*, is very descriptive.

"Dark-sided Du-chos! feet of wind! cold is thy seat on rocks. He (the dog) sees the roe; his ears are high; and half he bounds away. He looks around; but Ullin sleeps; he droops again his head. The winds come past; dark Du-chos, thinks, that Ullin's voice is there. But still he beholds him silent, laid amidst the waving heath. Dark-sided Du-chos, his voice no more shall send thee over the heath!"

* In order to illustrate this passage, it is proper to lay before the reader the scene of the two preceding battles. Between the hills of Mora and Lona lay the plain of Moi-lena, through which ran the river Lubar. The first battle, wherein Gaul, the son of Morni, commanded on the

their host. Cathmor was that beam from heaven which shone when his people were dark. He was honoured in the midst. Their souls rose trembling around. The king alone no gladness shewed; no stranger he to war!

“Why is the king so sad,” said Malthos eagle-eyed; “Remains there a foe at Lubar? Lives there among them, who can lift the spear? Not so peaceful was thy father, Borbar-dúthul*, sovereign of spears. His rage was a fire that always burned: his joy over fallen foes was great. Three days feasted the

the Caledonian side, was fought on the banks of Lubar. As there was little advantage obtained, on either side, the armies, after the battle, retained their former positions.

In the second battle, wherein Fillan commanded, the Irish, after the fall of Foldath, were driven up the hill of Lona; but, upon the coming of Cathmor to their aid, they regained their former situation, and drove back the Caledonians, in their turn: so that *Lubar winded again in their host*.

* Borbar-duthul, the father of Cathmor, was the brother of that Colc-ulla who is said, in the beginning of the fourth book, to have rebelled against Cormac king of Ireland. Borbar-duthul seems to have retained all the prejudice of his family against the succession of the posterity of Conar, on the Irish throne. From this short episode we learn some facts which tend to throw light on the history of the times. It appears, that, when Swaran invaded Ireland, he was only opposed by the Cael, who possessed Ulster, and the north of that island. Calmar, the son of Matha, whose gallant behaviour and death are related in the third book of Fingal, was the only chief of the race of the Fir-bolg, that joined the Cael, or Irish Caledonians, during the invasion of Swaran. The indecent joy, which Borbar-duthul expressed, upon the death of Calmar, is well suited with that spirit of revenge, which subsisted, universally, in every country where the feudal system was established. It would appear that some person had carried to Borbar-duthul that weapon, with which, it was pretended, Calmar had been killed.

the gray-haired hero, when he heard that Calmar fell: Calmar; who aided the race of Ullin, from Lara of the streams. Often did he feel, with his hands, the steel which, they said, had pierced his foe. He felt it with his hands, for Borbar-dúthul's eyes had failed. Yet was the king a run to his friends; a gale to lift their branches round. Joy was around him in his halls: he loved the sons of Bolga. His name remains in Atha, like the awful memory of ghosts, whose presence was terrible, but they blew the storm away. Now let the voices* of Erin raise the soul of the king; he that shone when war was dark, and laid the mighty low. Fonar, from that gray-browed rock, pour the tale of other times: pour it on wide-skirted Erin, as it settles round."

"To me," said Cathmor, "no song shall rise: nor Fonar sit on the rock of Lubar. The mighty there are laid low. Disturb not their rushing ghosts. Far, Malthos, far remove the sound of Erin's song. I rejoice not over the foe, when he ceases to lift the spear. With morning we pour our strength abroad. Fingal is wakened on his echoing hill."

Like waves, blown back by sudden winds, Erin retired, at the voice of the king. Deep-rolled into the field of night, they spread their humming tribes: Beneath his own tree, at intervals, each † bard sat
 I 2 down

* *The voices of Erin*, a poetical expression for the bards of Ireland.

† Not only the kings, but every petty chief, had their bards attending them, in the field, in the days of Ossian; and these bards, in proportion to the power of the chiefs, who retained them, had a number of inferior bards in their train. Upon solemn occasions, all the bards, in the army, would join in one chorus; either when they celebrated their victories, or lamented the death of a person, worthy and renowned, slain in the war. The words were of the composition of the arch-bard, retained by the king himself, who generally attained to that high office on account
 of

down with his harp. They raised the song, and touched the string: each to the chief he loved. Before a burning oak Sul-malla touched, at times, the harp. She touched the harp and heard, between, the breezes in her hair. In darkness near, lay the king of Atha, beneath an aged tree. The beam of the oak was turned from him; he saw the maid, but was not seen. His soul poured forth, in secret, when he beheld her tearful eye. "But battle is before thee, son of Borbar-duthul."

Amidst the harp, at intervals, she listened whether the warriors slept. Her soul was up; she longed, in secret, to pour her own sad song. The field is silent. On their wings, the blasts of night retire. The bards had ceased; and meteors came, red-winding with their ghosts. The sky grew dark: the forms
of

of his superior genius for poetry. As the persons of the bards were sacred, and the emoluments of their office considerable, the order, in succeeding times, became very numerous and insolent. It would appear, that after the introduction of Christianity, some served in the double capacity of bards and clergymen. It was, from this circumstance, that they had the name of *Cblere*, which is, probably, derived from the Latin Clericus. The *Cblere*, be their name derived from what it will, became, at last, a public nuisance; for, taking advantage of their sacred character, they went about, in great bodies, and lived, at discretion, in the houses of the chiefs; till another party, of the same order, drove them away by mere dint of satire. Some of the indelicate disputes of these worthy poetical combatants are handed down, by tradition, and shew how much the bards, at last, abused the privileges, which the admiration of their countrymen had conferred on the order. It was this insolent behaviour that induced the chiefs to retrench their number, and to take away those privileges which they were no longer worthy to enjoy. Their indolence, and disposition to lampoon, extinguished all the poetical fervour, which distinguished their predecessors, and makes us the less regret the extinction of the order.

of the dead were blended with the clouds. But heedless bends the daughter of Conmor, over the decaying flame. Thou wert alone in her soul, car-borne chief of Atha. She raised the voice of the song, and touched the harp between.

“Clun-galo* came; she missed the maid. Where art thou, beam of light? Hunters, from the mossy rock, saw you the blue-eyed fair? Are her steps on grassy Lumon; near the bed of roes! Ah me! I behold her bow in the hall. Where art thou, beam of light?

“Cease, † love of Conmor, cease; I hear thee not on the ridgy heath. My eye is turned to the king, whose path is terrible in war. He for whom my soul is up, in the season of my rest. Deep-bosomed in war he stands, he beholds me not from his cloud. Why, sun of Sul-malla, dost thou not look forth? I dwell in darkness here; wide over me flies the shadowy mist. Filled with dew are my locks: look thou from thy cloud, O sun of Sul-malla’s soul.”

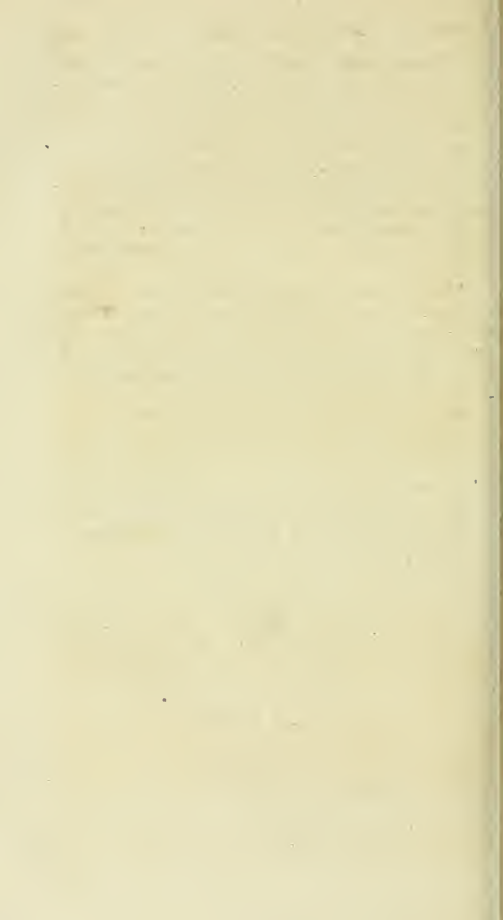
* * * * *

I 3

TEMORA :

* Clun-galo, *white-knee*, the wife of Conmor, king of Inis-huna, and the mother of Sul-malla. She is here represented, as missing her daughter, after she had fled with Cathmor.

† Sul-malla replies to the supposed questions of her mother. Towards the middle of this paragraph she calls Cathmor *the sun of her soul*, and continues the metaphor throughout. This book ends, we may suppose, about the middle of the third night, from the opening of the poem.



T E M O R A :

AN

E P I C P O E M.

THE ARGUMENT.

This book begins, about the middle of the third night from the opening of the poem. The poet describes a kind of mist, which rose, by night, from the lake of Lego, and was the usual residence of the souls of the dead, during the interval between their decease and the funeral song. The appearance of the ghost of Fillan above the cave where his body lay. His voice comes to Fingal, on the rock of Cormul. The king strikes the shield of Tremor, which was an infallible sign of his appearing in arms himself. The extraordinary effect of the sound of the shield. Sul-malla, starting from sleep, awakes Cathmor. Their affecting discourse. She insists with him, to sue for peace; he resolves to continue the war. He directs her to retire to the neighbouring valley of Lona, which was the residence of an old Druid, until the battle of the next day should be over. He awakes his army with the sound of his shield. The shield described. Fonar, the bard, at the desire of Cathmor, relates the first settlement of the Fir-bolg in Ireland, under their leader Larthon. Morning comes. Sul-malla retires to the valley of Lona. A lyric song concludes the book.

BOOK VII.

FROM the wood-skirted waters of Lego, ascend, at times, gray-bosomed mists, when the gates of the west are closed on the sun's eagle-eye. Wide, over Lara's stream, is poured the vapour dark and deep: the moon, like a dim shield, is swimming through its folds. With this, clothe the spirits of old their sudden gestures on the wind, when they stride, from blast to blast, along the dusky face of the night. Often blended with the gale, to some warrior's grave * they roll the mist, a gray dwelling to his ghost, until the songs arise.

A sound

* As the mist, which rose from the lake of Lego, occasioned diseases and death, the bards feigned, as here, that

A sound came from the desert; the rushing course of Conar in winds. He poured his deep mist on Fillan, at blue winding Lubar. Dark and mournful sat the ghost, bending in his gray ridge of smoke. The blast, at times, rolled him together: but the lovely form returned again. It returned with slow-bending eyes: and dark winding of locks of mist.

It was* dark. The sleeping host were still, in the skirts of night. The flame decayed, on the hill of Fingal; the king lay lonely on his shield. His eyes were half-closed in sleep; the voice of Fillan came. "Sleeps the husband of Clatho? Dwells the father of the fallen in rest? Am I forgot in the folds of darkness; lonely in the season of dreams?"

"Why

that it was the residence of the ghosts of the deceased, during the interval between their death and the pronouncing of the funeral elegy over their tombs; for it was not allowable, without that ceremony was performed, for the spirits of the dead to mix with their ancestors, *in their airy balls*. It was the business of the spirit of the nearest relation to the deceased, to take the mist of Lego, and pour it over the grave. We find here Conar, the son of Trenmor, the first king of Ireland, according to Ossian, performing this office for Fillan, as it was in the cause of the family of Conar, that that hero was killed.

* The night descriptions of Ossian were in high repute among succeeding bards. One of them delivered a sentiment, in a distich, more favourable to his taste for poetry, than to his gallantry towards the ladies. I shall here give a translation of it.

"More pleasant to me is the night of Cona, dark-streaming from Ossian's harp; more pleasant it is to me, than a white-bosomed dweller between my arms: than a fair-handed daughter of heroes, in the hour of rest."

Though tradition is not very satisfactory concerning the history of this poet, it has taken care to inform us, that he was *very old* when he wrote the distich. He lived (in what age is uncertain) in one of the western isles, and his name was Turloch Ciabh-glas, or *Turloch of the gray locks*.

“Why art thou in the midst of my dreams,” said Fingal, “as, sudden, he rose! Can I forget thee, my son, or thy path of fire in the field? Not such, on the soul of the king, come the deeds of the mighty in arms. They are not there a beam of lightning, which is seen, and is then no more. I remember thee, O Fillan, and my wrath begins to rise.”

The king took his deathful spear, and struck the deeply-sounding shield: his shield that hung high on night, the dismal sign of war! Ghosts fled on every side, and rolled their gathered forms on the wind. Thrice from the winding vale arose the voices of death. The harps* of the bards, untouched, sound mournful over the hill.

He struck again the shield: battles rose in the dreams of his host. The wide-tumbling strife is gleaming over their souls. Blue-shielded kings descend to war. Backward-looking armies fly; and mighty deeds are half-hid, in the bright gleams of steel.

But when the third sound arose; deer started from the clefts of their rocks. The screams of fowl are heard, in the desert, as each flew, frightened, on his blast.

* It was the opinion of the times, that, on the night preceding the death of a person worthy and renowned, the harps of those bards, who were retained by his family, emitted melancholy sounds. This was attributed, to use Ossian's expression, to *the light touch of ghosts*: who were supposed to have a fore-knowledge of events. The same opinion prevailed long in the north, and the particular sound was called, *the warning voice of the dead*. *The voice of deaths*, mentioned in the preceding sentence, was of a different kind. Each person was supposed to have an attendant spirit, who assumed his form and voice, on the night preceding his death, and appeared to some, in the attitude, in which the person was to die. The *voices of death* were the foreboding shrieks of those spirits.

blast. The sons of Albion half-rose, and half-assumed their spears. But silence rolled back on the host: they knew the shield of the king. Sleep returned to their eyes: the field was dark and still.

No sleep was thine in darkness, blue-eyed daughter of Conmor! Sul-malla heard the dreadful shield, and rose, amidst the night. Her steps are towards the king of Atha. "Can danger shake his daring soul!" In doubt, she stands, with bending eyes. Heaven burns with all its stars.

Again the shield resounds! She rushed. She stopt. Her voice half-rose. It failed. She saw him, amidst his arms, that gleamed to heaven's fire. She saw him dim in his locks, that rose to nightly wind. Away, for fear, she turned her steps. "Why should the king of Erin awake? Thou art not a dream to his rest, daughter of Inis-huna."

More dreadful rung the shield. Sul-malla starts. Her helmet falls. Loud-echoed Lubar's rock, as over it rolled the steel. Bursting from the dreams of night, Cathmor half-rose, beneath his tree. He saw the form of the maid, above him, on the rock. A red star, with twinkling-beam, looked down through her floating hair.

"Who comes through night to Cathmor, in the dark season of his dreams? Bringest thou ought of war? Who art thou, son of night? Standest thou before me, a form of the times of old? A voice from the fold of a cloud, to warn me of Erin's danger?"

"Nor traveller of night am I, nor voice from folded cloud: but I warn thee of the danger of Erin. Dost thou hear that sound? It is not the feeble, king of Atha, that rolls his signs on night."

"Let the warrior roll his signs; to Cathmor they are the sound of harps. My joy is great, voice of night, and burns over all my thoughts. This is the music of kings, on lonely hills, by night; when they light their daring souls, the sons of mighty deeds! The feeble dwell alone, in the valley of the breeze;

breeze; where mists lift their morning skirts, from the blue-winding streams."

"Not feeble, thou leader of heroes, were they, the fathers of my race. They dwelt in the darkness of battle: in their distant lands. Yet delights not my soul, in the signs of death! He*, who never yields, comes forth: Awake the bard of peace!"

Like a rock with its trickling waters, stood Cathmor in his tears. Her voice came, a breeze, on his soul, and waked the memory of her land; where she dwelt by her peaceful streams, before he came to the war of Conmor.

"Daughter of strangers," he said; (she trembling turned away) "long have I marked in her armour, the young pine of Inis-huna. But my soul, I said, is folded in a storm. Why should that beam arise, till my steps return in peace? Have I been pale in thy presence, when thou bidst me to fear the king? The time of danger, O maid, is the season of my soul; for then it swells a mighty stream, and rolls me on the foe.

"Beneath the moss-covered rock of Lona, near his own winding stream; gray in his locks of age, dwells Clonmal† king of harps. Above him is his
echoing

* Fingal is said to have never been overcome in battle. From this proceeded that title of honour which is always bestowed on him in tradition, *Fion-ghal na buai* FINGAL OF VICTORIES. In a poem, just now in my hands, which celebrates some of the great actions of Arthur the famous British hero, that appellation is often bestowed on him. The poem, from the phraseology, appears to be ancient; and is, perhaps, though that is not mentioned, a translation from the Welsh language.

† Claon-mal, *crooked eye-brow*. From the retired life of this person, it appears that he was of the order of the Druids; which supposition is not, at all, invalidated by the appellation of *king of harps*, here bestowed on him; for all agree that the bards were of the number of the Druids originally.

echoing oak, and the dun bounding of roes. The noise of our strife reaches his ear, as he bends in the thoughts of years. There let thy rest be, Sul-malla until our battle cease. Until I return, in my arms, from the skirts of the evening mist that rises, on Lona, round the dwelling of my love."

A light fell on the soul of the maid; it rose kindled before the king. She turned her face to Cathmor; her locks are struggling with winds. "Sooner shall the eagle of heaven be torn, from the streams of his roaring wind, when he sees the dun prey, before him, the young sons of the bounding roe, than thou, O Cathmor, be turned from the strife of renown. Soon may I see thee, warrior, from the skirts of the evening mist, when it is rolled around me, on Lona of the streams. While yet thou art distant far, strike, Cathmor, strike the shield, that joy may return to my darkened soul, as I lean on the mossy rock. But if thou should fall—I am in the land of strangers; O send thy voice, from thy cloud, to the maid of Inis-huna."

"Young branch of green-headed Lumon, why dost thou shake in the storm? Often has Cathmor returned from darkly-rolling wars. The darts of death are but hail to me; they have often bounded from my shield. I have risen brightened from battle, like a meteor from a stormy cloud. Return not, fair beam, from thy vale, when the roar of battle grows. Then might the foe escape, as from my fathers of old.

"They told to Son-mor*, of Clunar†, slain by Cormac, the giver of shells. Three days darkened
Son-mor,

* Son-mor, *tall handsome man*. He was the father of Borbar-duthul, chief of Atha, and grandfather to Cathmor himself.

† Cluan-er, *man of the field*. This chief was killed in battle by Cormac Mac-Conar, king of Ireland, the father of Roscrana, the first wife of Fingal. The story is alluded to in other poems.

Son-mor, over his brother's fall. His spouse beheld the silent king, and foresaw his steps to war. She prepared the bow, in secret, to attend her blue-shielded hero. To her dwelt darkness at Atha, when the warrior moved to his fields. From their hundred streams, by night, poured down the sons of Alnecma. They had heard the shield of the king, and their rage arose. In clanging arms, they moved along, towards Ullin the land of groves. Son-mor struck his shield, at times, the leader of the war.

"Far behind followed Sul-allin*, over the streamy hills. She was a light on the mountain, when they crossed the vale below. Her steps were stately on the vale, when they rose on the mossy hill. She feared to approach the king, who left her in Atha of hinds. But when the roar of battle rose; when host was rolled on host; when Son-mor burnt like the fire of heaven in clouds, with her spreading hair came Sul-allin; for she trembled for her king. He stopt the rushing strife to save the love of heroes. The foe fled by night; Clunar slept without his blood; the blood which ought to be poured upon the warrior's tomb.

"Nor rose the rage of Son-mor, but his days were dark and flow. Sul-allin wandered by her gray streams, with her tearful eyes. Often did she look, on the hero, when he was folded in his thoughts. But she shrunk from his eyes, and turned her lone steps away. Battles rose, like a tempest, and drove the mist from his soul. He beheld, with joy, her steps in the hall, and the white rising of her hands on the harp.

In † his arms strode the chief of Atha, to where his shield hung, high, in night: high on a mossy
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* Suil-al'uin. *beautiful eye*, the wife of Son-mor.

† To avoid multiplying notes, I shall give here the signification of the names of the stars engraved on the shield.
Cean-mathon,

bough, over Lubar's streamy roar. Seven bosses rose on the shield; the seven voices of the king, which his warriors received, from the wind, and marked over all their tribes.

On each boss is placed a star of night; Canmathon with beams unshorn; Col-derna rising from a cloud: Uloicho robed in mist; and the soft beam of Cathlin glittering on a rock. Fair-gleaming on its own blue wave, Reldurath half-sinks its western light. The red eye of Berthin looks, through a grove, on the slow-moving hunter, as he returns, through showery night, with the spoils of the bounding roe. Wide in the midst, arose the cloudless beams of Ton-thena; Ton-thena which looked, by night, on the course of the sea-tossed Larthon: Larthon, the first of Bolga's race, who travelled on the winds*. White-bosomed spread the sails of the king, towards streamy Inis-fail; dun night was rolled before him, with its skirts of mist. The winds were changeful in heaven, and rolled him from wave to wave. Then rose the fiery-haired Ton-thena, and laughed from her parted cloud. Larthon† rejoiced at the guiding beam, as it faint gleamed on the tumbling waters.

Beneath

Cean-mathon, head of the bear. Col-derna, slant and sharp beam. Ul-oicho, ruler of night. Cathlin, beam of the wave. Ren-durath, star of the twilight. Berthin, fire of the hill. Ton-thena, meteor of the waves. These etymologies, excepting that of Cean-mathon, are pretty exact. Of it I am not so certain; for it is not very probable, that the Fir-bolg had distinguished a constellation, so very early at the days of Larthon by the name of the bear.

* *To travel on the winds*, a poetical expression for sailing.

† Larthon is compounded of *Lear*, sea, and *thon*, wave. This name was given to the chief of the first colony of the Fir-bolg, who settled in Ireland, on account of his knowledge in navigation. A part of a old poem is still extant,

Beneath the spear of Cathmor, awaked that voice which awakes the bards. They came, dark-winding, from every side; each, with the sound of his harp. Before them rejoiced the king, as the traveller, in the day of the sun; when he hears, far-rolling around, the murmur of mossy streams; streams that burst, in the desert, from the rock of roes.

“Why,” said Fonar, “hear we the voice of the king, in the season of his rest? Were the dim forms of thy fathers bending in thy dreams? Perhaps they stand on that cloud, and wait for Fonar’s song; often they come to the fields where their sons are to lift the spear. Or shall our voice arise for him who lifts

K 2

the

extant, concerning this hero. The author of it, probably, took the hint from the episode in this book, relating to the first discovery of Ireland by Larthon. It abounds with those romantic fables of giants and magicians, which distinguish the compositions of the less ancient bards. The descriptions, contained in it, are ingenious and proportionable to the magnitude of the persons introduced; but, being unnatural, they are insipid and tedious. Had the bard kept within the bounds of probability, his genius was far from being contemptible. The exordium of this poem is not destitute of merit; but it is the only part of it that I think worthy of being presented to the reader.

“Who first sent the black ship, through ocean, like a whale through the bursting of foam? Look, from thy darkests, on Cronath, Ossian of the harps of old! Send thy light on the blue-rolling waters, that I may behold the king. I see him dark in his own shell of oak! sea-tossed Larthon, thy soul is fire. It is careless as the wind of thy sails; as the wave that rolls by thy side. But the silent green isle is before thee, with its sons, who are tall as woody Lumon; Lumon which sends from its top a thousand streams, white-wandering down its sides.”

It may, perhaps, be for the credit of this bard, to translate no more of this poem; for the continuation of his description of the Irish giants betrays his want of judgement.

the spear no more ; he that consumed the field, from Moma of the groves ?”

“ Not forgot is that cloud in war, bard of other times. High shall his tomb rise, on Moi-iena, the dwelling of renown. But, now, roll back my soul to the times of my fathers : to the years when first they rose, on Inis-huna’s waves. Nor alone pleasant to Cathmor is the remembrance of wood-covered Lumon. Lumon the land of streams, the dwelling of white-bosomed maids.”

“ Lumon * of foamy streams, thou risest on Fornar’s soul ! Thy sun is on thy side, on the rocks of thy bending trees. The dun roe is seen from thy furze ; the deer lifts his branchy head ; for he sees, at times, the hound, on the half-covered heath. Slow, on the vale, are the steps of maids ; the white-armed daughters of the bow : they lift their blue eyes to the hill, from amidst their wandering locks. Not there is the stride of Larthon, chief of Inis-huna. He mounts the wave on his own dark oak, in Cluba’s ridgy bay. That oak which he cut from Lumon, to bound along the sea. The maids turn their eyes away, lest the king should be lowly laid ; for never had they seen a ship, dark rider of the wave !

“ Now he dares to call the winds, and to mix with the mist of ocean. Blue Inis-fail rose, in smoke ; but dark-skirted night came down. The sons of Bolga feared. The fiery-haired Ton-thena rose. Culbin’s bay received the ship, in the bosom of its echoing woods. There, issued a stream, from Duthuma’s horrid cave ; where spirits gleamed, at times, with their half-finished forms.

“ Dreams descended on Larthon : he saw seven spirits of his fathers. He heard their half-formed words,

* Lumon, as I have remarked in a preceding note, was a hill in Inis-huna, near the residence of Sul-malla. This episode has an immediate connection with what is said of Larthon, in the description of Cathmor’s shield.

words, and dimly beheld the times to come. He beheld the kings of Atha, the sons of future days. They led their hosts along the field, like ridges of mist, which winds pour in autumn, over Atha of the groves.

“Larthon raised the hall of Samla*, to the soft sound of the harp. He went forth to the roes of Erin, to their wonted streams. Nor did he forget green-headed Lumon; he often bounded over his seas, to where white-handed Flathal † looked from the hill of roes. Lumon of the foamy streams, thou risest on Fonar’s soul.”

The beam awaked in the east. The misty heads of the mountains rose. Valleys shew, on every side, the gray-winding of their streams. His host heard the shield of Cathmor: at once they rose around; like a crowded sea, when first it feels the wings of the wind. The waves know not whither to roll; they lift their troubled heads.

Sad and slow retired Sul-malla to Lona of the streams. She went and often turned; her blue eyes rolled in tears. But when she came to the rock, that darkly covered Lona’s vale: she, looked from her bursting soul, on the king; and sunk, at once, behind.

Son ‡ of Alpin, strike the string. Is there ought of joy in the harp? Pour it then, on the soul of Ossian: it is folded in mist. I hear thee, O bard, in my night. But cease the lighty-trembling sound.

K 3

The

* Samla, *apparitions*, so called from the vision of Larthon, concerning his posterity.

† Flathal, *heavenly, exquisitely beautiful*. She was the wife of Larthon.

‡ The original of this lyric ode is one of the most beautiful passages of the poem. The harmony and variety of its versification, prove that the knowledge of music was considerably advanced in the days of Ossian. See the specimen of the original.

The joy of grief belongs to Ossian, amidst his dark-brown years.

Green thorn of the hill of ghosts, that shakest thy head to nightly winds ! I hear no sound in thee ; is there no spirit's windy skirt now rustling in thy leaves ? Often are the steps of the dead, in the dark-eddyng blasts ; when the moon, a dun shield, from the east, is rolled along the sky.

Ullin, Carril, and Ryno, voices of the days of old ! Let me hear you, in the darkness of Selma, and awake the soul of songs. I hear you not, ye children of music, in what hall of the clouds is your rest ? Do you touch the shadowy harp, robed with morning mist, where the sun comes sounding forth from his green-headed waves ?

TEMORA :

T E M O R A :

AN

E P I C P O E M.

THE ARGUMENT.

The fourth morning, from the opening of the poem, comes on. Fingal, still continuing in the place to which he had retired on the preceding night, is seen, at intervals, through the mist, which covered the rock of Cormul. The descent of the king is described. He orders Gaul, Dermid, and Caril the bard, to go to the valley of Cluna, and to conduct, from thence, to the Caledonian army, Ferad-artho, the son of Cairbe, the only person remaining of the family of Conar, the first king of Ireland. The king takes the command of the army, and prepares for battle. Marching towards the enemy, he comes to the cave of Lubar, where the body of Fillan lay. Upon seeing his dog Bran, who lay at the entrance of the cave, his grief returns. Cathmor arranges the army of the Fir-bolg in order of battle. The appearance of that hero. The general conflict is described. The actions of Fingal and Cathmor. A storm. The total rout of the Fir-bolg. The two kings engage in a column of mist, on the banks of Lubar. Their attitude and conference after the combat. The death of Cathmor. Fingal resigns the spear of Trenmor to Ossian. The ceremonies observed on that occasion. The spirit of Cathmor appears to Sul-malla, in the valley of Lona. Her sorrow. Evening comes on. A feast is prepared. The coming of Ferad-artho is announced by the songs of a hundred bards. The poem closes with a speech of Fingal.

BOOK VIII.

AS when the wintry winds have seized the waves of the mountain-lake, have seized them, in stormy night, and clothed them over with ice; white to the hunter's early eye, the billows still seem to roll. He turns his ear to the sound of each unequal ridge. But each is silent, gleaming, strewn with boughs and tufts of grass, which shake and whistle to the wind, over their gray seats of frost. So silent shone to the morning ridges of Morven's host, as each warrior looked up from his helmet towards

wards the hill of the king; the cloud-covered hill of Fingal, where he strode in the rolling of mist. At times is the hero seen, greatly dim in all his arms. From thought to thought rolled the war along his mighty soul.

Now is the coming forth of the king. First appeared the sword of Luno; the spear half issuing from a cloud, the shield still dim in mist. But when the stride of the king came abroad, with all his gray dewy locks in the wind; then rose the shouts of his host over every moving tribe. They gathered, gleaming, round with all their echoing shields. So rise the green seas round a spirit, that comes down from the squally wind. The traveller hears the sound afar, and lifts his head over the rock. He looks on the troubled bay, and thinks he dimly sees the form. The waves sport, unweildy, round, with all their backs of foam.

Far-distant stood the son of Morni, Duthno's race, and Cona's bard. We stood far-distant; each beneath his tree. We shuned the eyes of the king; we had not conquered in the field. A little stream rolled at my feet: I touched its light wave with my spear. I touched it with my spear; nor there was the soul of Ossian. It darkly rose, from thought to thought, and sent abroad the sigh.

"Son of Morni," said the king, "Dermid, hunter of roes! why are ye dark, like two rocks; each with its trickling waters? No wrath gathers on the soul of Fingal, against the chiefs of men. Ye are my strength of battle; the kindling of my joy in peace. My early voice was a pleasant gale to your ears when Fillan prepared the bow. The son of Fingal is not here, nor yet the chace of the bounding roes. But why should the breakers of shields stand, darkened, far away?"

Tall they strode towards the king; they saw him turned Mora's wind. His tears came down, for his blue-eyed son, who slept in the cave of streams.

But

But he brightened before them, and spoke to the broad-shielded kings.

“Crommal, with woody rocks, and misty top, the field of winds, pours forth, to the fight, blue Lubar’s fireamy roar. Behind it rolls clear-winding Lavath, in the still vale of deer. A cave is dark in a rock; above it strong-winged eagles dwell; broad-headed oaks, before it sound in Cluna’s wind. Within in his locks of youth is Feradartho*, blue-eyed

* Ferad-artho was the son of Cairbar Mac-Cormac, king of Ireland. He was the only one remaining of the race of Conar, the son of Trenmor, the first Irish monarch, according to Ossian. In order to make this passage thoroughly understood, it may not be improper to recapitulate some part of what has been said in preceding notes. Upon the death of Conar, the son of Trenmor, his son Cormac succeeded on the Irish throne. Cormac reigned long. His children were, Cairbar, who succeeded him, and Ros-crano, the first wife of Fingal. Cairbar, long before the death of his father Cormac, had taken to wife Bos-gala, the daughter of Colgar, one of the most powerful chiefs in Connaught, and had, by her, Artho, afterwards king of Ireland. Soon after Artho arrived at man’s estate, his mother Bos-gala died, and Cairbar took to wife Beltanno, the daughter of Conachar of Ullin, who brought him a son, whom he called Ferad-artho, i. e. *a man in place of Artho*. The occasion of the name was this. Artho, when his brother was born, was absent, on an expedition in the south of Ireland. A false report was brought to his father that he was killed. Cairbar, to use the words of the poem on the subject, *darkened for his fair-haired son*. He turned to the young beam of light, the son of Beltanno of Conachar. *Thou shalt be Ferad-artho, be said, a fire before thy race*. Cairbar, soon after, died, nor did Artho long survive him. Artho was succeeded in the Irish throne, by his son Cormac, who, in his minority, was murdered by Cairbar, the son of Borbar-duthal. Ferad-artho, says tradition, was very young, when the expedition of Fingal, to settle

eyed king, the son of broad-shielded Cairbar, from Ullin of the roes. He listens to the voice of Condan, as gray, he bends in feeble light. He listens, for his foes dwell in the echoing halls of Temora. He comes, at times, abroad, in the skirts of mist, to pierce the bounding roes. When the sun looks on the field, nor by the rock nor stream, is he! He shuns the race of Bolga, who dwell in his father's hall. Tell him, that Fingal lifts the spear, and that his foes perhaps may fail.

“Lift up, O Gaul, the shield before him. Stretch, Dermid, Temora's spear. Be thy voice in his ear, O Carril, with the deeds of his fathers. Lead him to green *Moi-lena*, to the dusky field of ghosts; for there I fall forward in battle, in the folds of war. Before *dan* night descends, come to high *Dunmora's* top. Look, from the gray rolling of mist,

settle him on the throne of Ireland, happened. During the short reign of young Cormac, *Ferad-artho* lived at the royal palace of Temora. Upon the murder of the king, Condan, the bard, conveyed *Ferad-artho*, privately, to the cave of *Cluna*, behind the mountain *Crommal*, in *Ulster*, where they both lived concealed, during the usurpation of the family of *Atha*. All these particulars, concerning *Ferad-artho*, may be gathered from the compositions of *Ossian*: A bard, less ancient, has delivered the whole history, in a poem just now in my possession. It has little merit, if we except the scene between *Ferad-artho*, and the messengers of *Fingal*, upon their arrival, in the valley of *Cluna*. After hearing of the great actions of *Fingal*, the young prince proposes the following questions concerning him, to *Gaul* and *Dermid*. “Is the king tall as the rock of my cave? Is his spear a fir of *Cluna*? Is he a rough-winged blast, on the mountain, which takes the green oak by the head, and tears it from its hill? Glitters *Lubar* within his strides, when he sends his stately steps along? Nor is he tall, said *Gaul*, as that rock: nor glitter streams within his strides; but his soul is a mighty flood, like the strength of *Ullin's* seas.”

mist, on Lena of the streams. If there my standard shall float on wind, over Lubar's gleaming course, then has not Fingal failed in the last of his fields."

Such were his words: nor aught replied the silent, striding kings. They looked side-long, on Erin's host, and darkened, as they went. Never before had they left the king, in the midst of the stormy field. Behind them, touching at times his harp, the gray-haired Carril moved. He foresaw the fall of the people, and mournful was the sound! It was like a breeze that comes, by fits, over Lego's reedy lake; when sleep half-descends on the hunter, within his mossy cave.

"Why bends the bard of Cona," said Fingal, "over his secret stream? Is this a time for sorrow, father of low-laid Oscar? Be the warriors * remembered
bered

* It is supposed Malvina speaks the following soliloquy, "Malvina is like the bow of the shower, in the secret valley of streams: it is bright; but the drops of heaven roll on its blended light. They say, that I am fair within my locks; but, on my brightness is the wandering of tears. Darkness flies over my soul, as the dusky wave of the breeze, along the grass of Lutha. Yet have not the roes failed me, when I moved between the hills. Pleasant, beneath my white hand, arose the sound of harps. What then, daughter of Lutha, travels over thy soul, like the dreary path of a ghost, along the nightly beam? Should the young warrior fall, in the roar of his troubled fields! Young virgins of Lutha arise, call back the wandering thoughts of Malvina. Awake the voice of the harp, along my echoing vale. Then shall my soul come forth, like a light from the gates of the morn, when clouds are rolled around them, with their broken sides.

"Dweller of my thoughts by night, whose form ascends in troubled fields, why dost thou stir up my soul, thou far-distant son of the king! Is that the ship of my love, its dark course through the ridges of ocean? How art thou so sudden, Oscar, from the heath of shields?"

bered in peace; when echoing shields are heard no more. Bend, then, in grief, over the flood, where blows the mountain breeze. Let them pass on thy soul, the blue-eyed dwellers of Lena. But Errin rolls to war, wide-tumbling, rough, and dark. Lift, Ossian, lift the shield. I am alone, my son!"

As comes the sudden voice of winds to the becalmed ship of Inis-huna, and drives it large, along the deep, dark rider of the wave: so the voice of Fingal sent Ossian, tall, along the heath. He lifted high, his shining shield, in the dusky wing of war: like the broad, blank moon in the skirt of a cloud before the storms arise.

Loud, from Moss-covered Mora, poured down, at once, the broad-winged war. Fingal led his people forth, king of Morven of streams. On high spreads the eagle's wing. His gray hair is poured on his shoulders broad. In thunder are his mighty strides. He often stood, and saw behind, the wide gleaming rolling of armour. A rock he seemed, gray over with ice, whose woods are high in wind. Bright streams leap from its head, and spread their foam on blasts.

Now he came to Lubar's cave, where Fillan darkly slept. Bran still lay on the broken shield: the eagle-wing is strewed on winds. Bright, from withered furze, looked forth the hero's spear. Then grief stirred the soul of the king, like whirlwinds blackening on a lake. He turned his sudden step, and leaned on his bending spear.

White-breasted Bran came bounding with joy to the known path of Fingal. He came and looked towards the cave, where the blue-eyed hunter lay; for he was wont to stride, with morning to the dewy bed of the roe. It was then the tears of the king came

The rest of this poem, it is said, consisted of a dialogue between Ullin and Malvina, wherein the distress of the latter is carried to the highest pitch.

came down, and all his soul was dark. But as the rising wind rolls away the storm of rain, and leaves the white streams to the sun, and high hills with their heads of grass; so the returning war brightened the mind of Fingal. He bounded *, on his spear, over Lubar, and struck his echoing shield. His ridgy host bend forward, at once, with all their pointed steel.

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Nor

* The Irish compositions concerning Fingal invariably speak of him as a giant. Of these Hibernian poems there are now many in my hands. From the language, and allusions to the times in which they were writ, I should fix the date of their composition in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. In some passages, the poetry is far from wanting merit; but the fable is unnatural, and the whole conduct of the pieces injudicious. I shall give one instance of the extravagant fictions of the Irish bards, in a poem which they, most unjustly, ascribe to Ossian. The story of it is this: Ireland being threatened with an invasion from some part of Scandinavia, Fingal sent Ossian, Oscar, and Ca-olt, to watch the bay, in which it was expected the enemy was to land. Oscar, unluckily, fell asleep, before the Scandinavians appeared; and, great as he was, says the Irish bard, he had one bad property, that no less could waken him before his time, than cutting off one of his fingers, or throwing a great stone against his head; and it was dangerous to come near him, on those occasions, till he had recovered himself, and was fully awake. Ca-olt, who was employed by Ossian to waken his son, made choice of throwing the stone against his head, as the least dangerous expedient. The stone, rebounding from the hero's head, shook, as it rolled along, the hill for three miles round. Oscar rose in rage, fought bravely, and, singly, vanquished a wing of the enemy's army. Thus the bard goes on till Fingal put an end to the war, by the total rout of the Scandinavians. Peurile, and even despicable, as these fictions are, yet Keating and O'Flaherty have no better authority than the poems which contain them, for all that they write concerning Fion Mac-omnal, and the pretended militia of Ireland.

Nor Erin heard, with fear the sound: wide they came rolling along. Dark Malthos, in the wing of war, looks forward from shaggy brows. Next rose that beam of light Hidalla; then the side-long-looking gloom of Maronnan. Blue-shielded Clonar lifts the spear; Cormar shakes his bushy locks on the wind. Slowly, from behind a rock, rose the bright form of Atha. First appeared his two pointed spears, then the half of his burnished shield: like the rising of a nightly meteor, over the vale of ghosts. But when he shone all abroad: the hosts plunged, at once, into strife. The gleaming waves of steel are poured on either side.

As meet two troubled seas, with the rolling of all their waves, when they feel the wings of contending winds, in the rock-sided firth of Lumon; along the echoing hills is the dim course of ghosts: from the blast fall the torn groves on the deep, amidst the foamy path of whales. So mixed the hosts! Now Fingal; now Cathmor came abroad. The dark tumbling of death is before them: the gleam of broken steel is rolled on their steps, as, loud, the high-bounding kings hewed down the ridge of shields.

Maronnan fell, by Fingal, laid large across a stream. The waters gathered by his side, and leapt gray over his bossy shield. Clonar is pierced by Cathmor: nor yet lay the chief on earth. An oak seized his hair in his fall. His helmet rolled on the ground. By its thong, hung his broad shield; over it wandered his streaming blood. Tlamin* shall weep, in the hall, and strike

* Tla-min, *mildly soft*. The loves of Clonar and Tlamin were rendered famous in the north, by a fragment of a Lyric poem, still preserved, which is ascribed to Ossian. It is a dialogue between Clonar and Tla-min. She begins with a soliloquy, which he overhears.

Tlamin. "Clonar, son of Conglas of I-mor, young hunter of dun-sided roes! where art thou laid, amidst rushes, beneath the passing wing of the breeze? I behold thee, my
love,

strike her heaving breast. Nor did Ossian forget the spear, in the wing of his war. He strewed the field with dead. Young Hidalla came. Soft voice of streamy Clonra ! Why dost thou lift the steel ? O that we meet in the strife of song, in thy own rushy vale ! Malthos beheld him low, and darkened as he rushed along. On either side of a stream, we bend in the echoing strife. Heaven comes rolling down : around burst the voices of squally winds. Hills are clothed, at times, in fire. Thunder rolls in wreaths of mist. In darkness shrunk the foe : Morven's warriors stood aghast. Still I bent over the stream, amidst my whistling locks.

Then rose the voice of Fingal, and the sound of the flying foe. I saw the king, at times, in lightning darkly striding in his might. I struck my echoing
L 2
shield,

love, in the plain of thy own dark streams ! The clung thorn is rolled by the wind, and rustles along his shield. Bright in his locks he lies : the thoughts of his dreams fly, darkening, over his face. Thou thinkest of the battles of Ossian, young son of the echoing isle !

“ Half-hid, in the grove, I sit down. Fly back, ye mists of the hill. Why should ye hide her love from the blue eyes of Tla-min of harps ?

Clonar. “ As the spirit, seen in a dream, flies off from our opening eyes, we think we behold his bright path between the closing hills ; so fled the daughter of Clun-gal, from the sight of Clonar of shields. Arise, from the gathering of trees ; blue-eyed Tlamin arise.

Tlamin. “ I turn me away from his steps. Why should he know of my love ! My white breast is heaving over sighs, as foam on the dark course of streams. But he passes away in his arms ! Son of Conglas, my soul is sad.

Clonar. “ It was the shield of Fingal ! the voice of kings from Selma of harps ! My path is towards green Erin. Arise, fair light, from thy shades. Come to the field of my soul, there is the spreading of hosts. Arise, on Clonar's troubled soul, young daughter of blue shield-ed Clungal.”

Clungal was the chief of I-mor, one of the Hebrides.

shield, and hung forward on the steps of Alnecma: the foe is rolled before me, like a wreath of smoke.

The sun looked forth from his cloud. The hundred streams of Moi-lena shone. Slow rose the blue columns of mist, against the glittering hill. Where are the mighty kings! * Nor by that stream, nor wood, are they! I hear the clang of arms! Their strife is in the bosom of mist. Such is the contending of spirits in a nightly cloud, when they strive for the wintry wings of winds, and the rolling of the foam-covered waves.

I rushed along. The gray mist rose. Tall, gleaming, they stood at Lubar. Cathmor leaned against a rock. His half-fallen shield received the stream, that leapt from the moss above. Towards him is the stride of Fingal; he saw the hero's blood. His sword fell slowly to his side. He spoke, midst his darkening joy.

"Yields the race of Borbar-duthal? Or still does he lift the spear? Not unheard is thy name, in Selma, in the green dwelling of strangers. It has come, like the breeze of his desert, to the ear of Fingal. Come to my hill of feasts: the mighty fail, at times.

No

* Fingal and Cathmor. The conduct of the poet, in this passage is remarkable. His numerous descriptions of single combats had already exhausted the subject. Nothing new, nor adequate to our high idea of the kings, could be said. Ossian, therefore, throws a *column of mist* over the whole, and leaves the combat to the imagination of the reader. Poets have almost universally failed in their descriptions of this sort. Not all the strength of Homer could sustain, with dignity, the *minutiæ* of a single combat. The throwing of a spear, and the braying of a shield, as some of our own poets most elegantly express it, convey no grand ideas. Our imagination stretches beyond, and, consequently, despises, the description. It were, therefore, well, for some poets, in my opinion, though it is, perhaps, somewhat singular) to have, sometimes, like Ossian, thrown *mist* over their single combats.

No fire am I to low-laid foes: I rejoice not over the fall of the brave. To close* the wound is mine: I have known the herbs of the hills. I seized their fair heads, on high, as they waved by their sacred streams. Thou art dark and silent, king of Atha of strangers."

"By Atha of the streams," he said, "there rises a mossy rock. On its head is the wandering of boughs, within the course of winds. Dark, in its face, is a cave with its own loud rill. There have I heard the tread of strangers †, when they passed to my hall of shells. Joy rose, like a flame on my soul:
L 3
I blest

* Fingal is very much celebrated, in tradition, for his knowledge in the virtues of herbs. The Irish poems, concerning him, often represent him, curing the wounds which his chiefs received in battle. They fable concerning him, that he was in possession of a cup, containing the essence of herbs, which instantaneously healed wounds. The knowledge of curing the wounded, was, till of late universal among the highlanders. We hear of no other disorder, which required the skill of physic. The wholesomeness of the climate, and an active life, spent in hunting, excluded diseases.

† The hospitable disposition of Cathmor was unparalleled. He reflects, with pleasure, even in his last moments, on the relief he had afforded to strangers. The very tread of their feet was pleasant in his ear. His hospitality was not passed unnoticed by succeeding bards; for, with them, it became a proverb, when they described the hospitable disposition of a hero, *that he was like Cathmor of Atha, the friend of strangers*. It will seem strange, that, in all the Irish traditions, there is no mention made of Cathmor. This must be attributed to the revolutions and domestic confusions which happened in that island, and utterly cut off all the real traditions concerning so short a period. All that we have related of the state of Ireland before the fifth century is of late invention, and the work of ill informed senachies and injudicious bards.

I blest the echoing rock. Here be my dwelling, in darkness in my grassy vale. From this I shall mount the breeze, that pursues my thistle's beard; or look down on blue-winding Atha, from its wandering mist."

"Why speaks the king of the tomb? Ossian! the warrior has failed! Joy meet thy soul, like a stream, Cathmor, friend of strangers! My son, I hear the call of years: they take my spear as they pass along. Why does not Fingal, they seem to say, rest within his hall? Dost thou always delight in blood? In the tears of the sad. No: ye darkly-rolling years, Fingal delights not in blood. Tears are wintry streams that waste away my soul. But when I lie down to rest, then comes the mighty voice of war. It wakes me, in my hall, and calls forth all my steel. It shall call it forth no more; Ossian, take thou thy father's spear. Lift it, in battle, when the proud arise.

"My fathers, Ossian, trace my steps; my deeds are pleasant to their eyes. Wherever I come forth to battle, on my field are their columns of mist. But mine arm rescued the feeble; the haughty found my rage was fire. Never, over the fallen, did mine eye rejoice. For this * my fathers shall meet me at the gates

* We see, from this passage, that, even in the times of Ossian, and, consequently, before the introduction of Christianity, they had some idea of rewards and punishments after death. Those who behaved, in life, with bravery and virtue, were received with joy, to the airy halls of their fathers: but *the dark in soul*, to use the expression of the poet, were spurned away *from the habitation of heroes, to wander on all the winds*. Another opinion, which prevailed in those times, tended not a little to make individuals emulous to excel one another in martial achievements. It was thought, that in the *ball of clouds*, every one had a seat, raised above others, in proportion as he excelled them, in valour, when he lived.

gates of their airy halls, tall, with robes of light, with mildly-kindled eyes. But, to the proud in arms, they are darkened moons in heaven, which send the fire of night, red-wandering over their face.

“ Father of heroes, Trenmor, dweller of eddying winds ! I give thy spear to Ossian, let thine eye rejoice. Thee have I seen, at times, bright from between thy clouds ; so appear to my son, when he is to lift the spear : then shall he remember thy mighty deeds, though thou art now but a blast.”

He gave the spear to my hand, and raised, at once, a stone on high, to speak to future times, with its gray head of moss. Beneath he placed a sword* in earth, and one bright boss from his shield. Dark in thought, a-while he bends : his words, at length came forth.

“ When thou, O stone, shall moulder down, and lose thee, in the moss of years, then shall the traveller come, and whistling pass away. Thou know’st not, feeble wanderer, that fame once shone on Moilena. Here Fingal resigned his spear, after the last of his fields. Pass away, thou empty shade ; in thy voice there is no renown. Thou dwellest by some peaceful stream ; yet a few years, and thou art gone. No one remembers thee, thou dweller of thick mist ! But Fingal shall be clothed with fame, a beam of light to other times ; for he went forth, in echoing steel to save the weak in arms.”

Brightening in his fame, the king strode to Lubar’s sounding oak, where it bent, from its rock, over the bright tumbling stream. Beneath it is a narrow plain, and the sound of the fount of the rock.
Here

* There are some stones still to be seen in the north, which were erected, as memorials of some remarkable transactions between the ancient chiefs. There are generally found, beneath them, some piece of arms, and a bit of half-burnt wood. The cause of placing the last there is not mentioned in tradition.

Here the standard * of Morven poured its wreaths on the wind, to mark the way of Ferad-artho, from his secret vale. Bright, from his parted west, the sun of heaven looked abroad. The hero saw his people, and heard their shouts of joy. In broken ridges round, they glittered to the beam. The king rejoiced, as a hunter in his own green vale, when, after the storm is rolled away, he sees the gleaming sides of the rocks. The green thorn shakes its head in their face; from their top, look forward the roes.

Gray † at his mossy cave is bent the aged form of Clonmal, The eyes of the bard had failed. He leaned forward, on his staff. Bright in her locks, before him, Sul-malla listened to the tale; the tale of the kings of Atha, in the days of old. The noise of battle had ceased in his ear: he stopt, and raised the sacred sigh. The spirits of the dead, they said, often lightened over his soul. He saw the king of Atha low, beneath his bending tree.

“Why art thou dark?” said the maid, “The strife of arms is past. Soon ‡ shall he come to thy cave,

* The erecting of his standard on the bank of Lubar, was the signal which Fingal, in the beginning of the book, promised to give to the chiefs, who went to conduct Ferad-artho to the army, should he himself prevail in battle. This standard here (and in every other part of Ossian's poems, where it is mentioned) is called, the *sun-beam*. The reason of this appellation is given more than once in notes preceding.

† The poet changes the scene to the valley of Lona, whither Sul-mala had been sent by Cathmor before the battle. Clonmal, an aged bard, or rather Druid, as he seems here to be endued with a prescience of events, had long dwelt there in a cave. This scene is awful and solemn, and calculated to throw a melancholy gloom over the mind.

‡ Cathmor had promised, in the seventh book, to come to the cave of Clonmal, after the battle was over.

cave, over thy winding streams. The sun looks from the rocks of the west. The mists of the lake arise. Gray, they spread on that hill, the rushy dwelling of roes. From the mist shall my king appear ! Behold, he comes in his arms. Come to the cave of Cloninal, O my best beloved !”

It was the spirit of Cathmor, stalking, large, a gleaming form. He sunk by the hollow stream, that roared between the hills. “It was but the hunter,” she said, “who searches for the bed of the roe. His steps are not forth to war; his spouse expects him with night. He shall, whistling, return, with the spoils of the dark-brown hinds.” Her eyes are turned to the hill; again the stately form came down. She rose, in the midst of joy. He retired in mist. Gradual vanish his limbs of smoke, and mix with the mountain-wind. Then she knew that he fell ! “King of Erin art thou low ?” Let Ossian forget her grief; it wastes the soul of age*.

Evening

* Tradition relates, that Ossian, the next day after the decisive battle between Fingal and Cathmor, went to find out Sul-malla in the valley of Lona. His address to her, which is still preserved, I here lay before the reader.

“Awake, thou daughter of Connor, from the fern-skirted cavern of Lona. Awake, thou sun-beam in deserts; warriors one day must fail. They move forth, like terrible lights; but often their cloud is near. Go to the valley of streams, to the wandering of herds, on Lumon; there dwells, in his lazy mist, the man of many days. But he is unknown, Sul-malla, like the thistle of the rocks of roes: it shakes its gray beard in the wind, and falls unseen of our eyes. Not such are the kings of men, their departure is a meteor of fire, which pours its red course from the desert, over the bosom of night.

“He is mixed with the warriors of old, those fires that have hid their heads. At times shall they come forth in song. Not forgot has the warrior failed. He has not seen Sul-malla, the fall of a beam of his own: no fair-haired

Evening came down on *Moi-lena*. Gray rolled the streams on the land. Loud came forth the voice of *Fingal*: the beam of oaks arose. The people gathered round with gladness; with gladness blended with shades. They side-long-looked to the king, and beheld his unfinished joy. Pleasant, from the way of the desert, the voice of music came. It seemed, at first, the noise of a stream, far-distant on its rocks. Slow it rolled along the hill like the ruffled wing of a breeze, when it takes the tufted beard of the rocks, in the still season of night. It was the voice of *Condán*, mixed with *Carril's* trembling harp. They came with blue-eyed *Ferad-artha*, to *Mora* of the streams.

Sudden bursts the song from our bards, on *Lena*: the host struck their shields midst the sound. Gladness rose brightening on the king, like the beam of a cloudy day when it rises, on the green hill before the roar of winds. He struck the bossy shield of kings; at once they cease around. The people lean forward from their spears, towards the voice of their land *.

Sons

haired son, in his blood, young troubler of the field. I am lonely, young branch of *Lumon*, I may hear the voice of the feeble, when my strength shall have failed in years, for young *Oscar* has ceased on his field.—* * *

Sul-malla returned to her own country, and makes a considerable figure in the poem which immediately follows; her behaviour in that piece accounts for that partial regard with which the poet speaks of her throughout *Temora*.

* Before I finish my notes, it may not be altogether improper to obviate an objection, which may be made to the credibility of the story of *Temora*, as related by *Osian*. It may be asked, whether it is probable, that *Fingal* could perform such actions as are ascribed to him in this book, at an age when his grandson, *Oscar*, had acquired so much reputation in arms. To this it may be answered, that *Fingal* was but very young [Book IV.] when he took to wife *Ros-crana*, who soon after became the

“ Sons of Morven, spread the feast; - send the night away on song. Ye have shone around me, and the dark storm is past. My people are the windy rocks, from which I spread my eagle wings, when I rush forth to renown, and seize it on its field. Ossian, thou hast the spear of Fingal: it is not the staff of a boy with which he strews the thistle round, young wanderer of the field. No: it is the lance of the mighty, with which they stretched forth their hands to death. Look to thy fathers, my son; they are awful beams. With morning lead Ferad-artho forth to the echoing halls of Temora. Remind him of the kings of Erin: the stately forms of old. Let not the fallen be forgot, they were mighty in the field. Let Carril pour his song, that the kings may rejoice in their mist. To-morrow I spread my sails to Selma's shaded walls; where streamy Duthula winds through the seats of roes.”

OINA-MORUL:

the mother of Ossian. Ossian was also extremely young when he married Ever-allin, the mother of Oscar. Tradition relates, that Fingal was but eighteen years old at the birth of his son Ossian; and that Ossian was much about the same age, when Oscar, his son was born. Oscar, perhaps, might be about twenty when he was killed, in the battle of Gabhra, [Book I.] so the age of Fingal, when the decisive battle was fought between him and Cathmor, was just fifty-six years. In those times of activity and health, the natural strength and vigour of a man was little abated, at such an age; so that there is nothing improbable in the actions of Fingal, as related in this book.

O I N A - M O R U L :

A P O E M.

THE ARGUMENT.

After an address to Malvina, the daughter of Toscar, Ossian proceeds to relate his own expedition to Fuarfed, an island of Scandinavia. Mal-orchal, king of Fuarfed, being hard pressed in war, by Ton-thormod, chief of Sardronlo, (who had demanded, in vain, the daughter of Mal-orchal in marriage) Fingal sent Ossian to his aid. Ossian, on the day after his arrival, came to battle with Ton-thormod, and took him prisoner. Mal-orchal offers his daughter Cina-moral to Ossian; but he, discovering her passion for Ton-thormod, generously surrenders her to her lover, and brings about a reconciliation between the two kings.

AS flies the unconstant sun, over Larmon's grassy hill; so pass the tales of old, along my soul, by night. When bards are removed to their place; when harps are hung in Selma's hall; then comes a voice to Ossian, and awakes his soul. It is the voice of years that are gone: they roll before me, with all their deeds. I seize, the tales, as they pass, and pour them forth in song. Nor a troubled stream is the song of the king, it is like the rising of music from Lutha of the strings. Lutha of many strings, not silent are thy streamy rocks, when the white hands of Malvina move upon the harp. Light of the shadowy thoughts, that fly across my soul, daughter of Toscar of helmets, wilt thou not hear the song! We call back, maid of Lutha, the years that have rolled away.

It was in the days of the king*, while yet my locks were young, that I marked Con-cathlin†,

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on

* Fingal.

† Con-cathlin, *mild beam of the wave*. What star was so called of old is not easily ascertained. Some now distinguish the pole-star by that name. A song, which is
still

on high, from ocean's nightly wave. My course was towards the isle of Fuarfed, woody dweller of seas. Fingal had sent me to the aid of Mal-orchal, king of Fuarfed wild: for war was around him, and our fathers had met, at the feast.

In Col-coiled, I bound my sails, and sent my sword to Mal-orchol of shells. He knew the signal of Albion, and his joy arose. He came from his own high hall, and seized my hand in grief. "Why comes the race of heroes to a falling king? Tonthormod of many spears is the chief of wavy Sardronla. He saw and loved my daughter white-bosomed Oina-morul. He fought; I denied the maid; for our fathers had been foes. He came, with battle, to Fuarfed. My people are rolled away. Why comes the race of heroes to a falling king?"

I come not, I said, to look, like a boy, on the strife. Fingal remembers Mal-orchol, and his hall for strangers. From his waves, the warrior descended, on the woody isle. Thou wert no cloud before him. Thy feast was spread with songs. For this my sword shall rise; and thy foes perhaps may fail. Our friends are not forgot in their danger, though distant is our land.

Son

still in repute, among the sea-faring part of the highlanders, alludes to this passage of Ossian. The author commends the knowledge of Ossian in sea affairs, a merit, which, perhaps, few of us moderns will allow him, or any in the age in which he lived. One thing is certain, that the Caledonians often made their way through the dangerous and tempestuous seas of Scandinavia; which is more, perhaps, than the more polished nations, subsisting in those times, dared to venture. In estimating the degree of knowledge of arts among the ancients, we ought not to bring it into comparison with the improvements of modern times. Our advantages over them proceed more from accident, than any merit of ours.

Son of the daring Trenmor, thy words are like the voice of Cruth-loda, when he speaks, from his parting cloud, strong dweller of the sky ! Many have rejoiced at my feast ; but they all have forgot Mal-orchol. I have looked towards all the winds, but no white sails were seen. But steel* resounds in my hall ; and not the joyful shells. Come to my dwelling race of heroes ; dark-skirted night is near. Hear the voice of songs, from the maid of Fuarfed wild.

We went. On the harp arose the white hands of Oina-morul. She waked her own sad tale, from every trembling string. I stood in silence ; for bright in her locks was the daughter of many isles. Her eyes were like two stars, looking forward through a rushing shower. The mariner marks them on high, and blesses the lovely beams. With morning we rushed to battle, to Tormul's resounding stream : the foe moved to the sound of Ton-thormod's bossy shield. From wing to wing the strife was mixed. I met the chief of

M 2

Sardronla,

* There is a severe satire couched in this expression, against the guests of Mal-orchal. Had his feast been still spread, had joy continued in his hall, his former parasites would not have failed to resort to him. But as the time of festivity was past, their attendance also ceased. The sentiments of a certain old bard are agreeable to this observation. He, poetically, compares a great man to a fire kindled in a desert place. " Those that pay court to him, says he, are rolling large around him, like the smoke about the fire. This smoke gives the fire a great appearance at a distance, but it is but an empty vapour itself, and varying its form at every breeze. When the trunk, which fed the fire, is consumed, the smoke departs on all the winds. So the flatterers forsake their chief, when his power declines." I have chosen to give a paraphrase, rather than a translation, of this passage, as the original is verbose and frothy, notwithstanding of the sentimental merit of the author. He was one of the less ancient bards, and their compositions are not nervous enough to bear a literal translation.

Sardronla. Wide flew his broken steel. I seized the king in fight. I gave his hand, bound fast with thongs, to Mal-orchol, the giver of shells. Joy rose at the feast of Fuarfed, for the foe had failed. Ton-thormod turned his face away, from Oina-morul of isles.

Son of Fingal, begun Mal-orchal, not forgot shalt thou pass from me. A light shall dwell in thy ship. Oina-Morul of flow-rolling eyes. She shall kindle gladness, along thy mighty soul. Nor unheeded shall the maid move in Selma, through the dwelling of kings.

In the hall I lay in night. Mine eyes were half closed in sleep. Soft music came to mine ear: it was like the rising breeze, that whirls at first the thistle's beard; then flies dark-shadowy, over the grass. It was the maid of Fuarfed wild: she raised the nightly song; for she knew that my soul was a stream, that flowed at pleasant sounds.

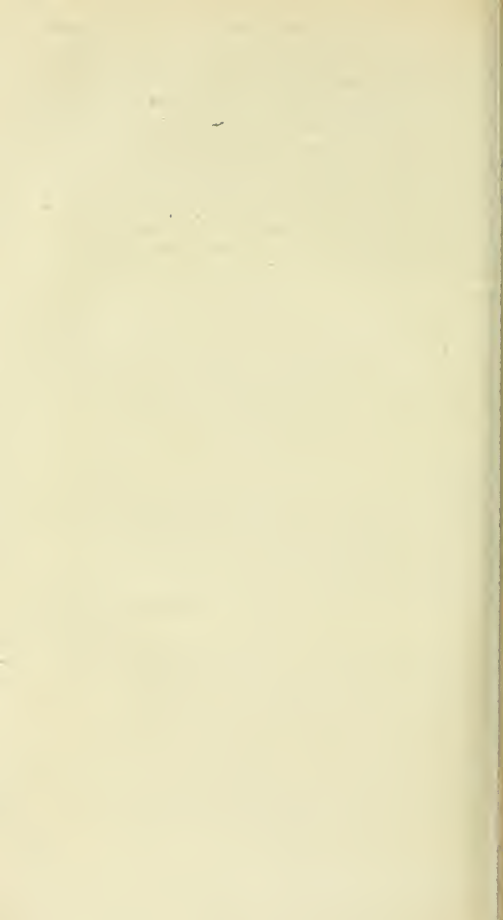
Who looks, she said, from his rock, on ocean's closing mist? His long locks, like the raven's wing, are wandering on the blast. Stately are his steps in grief. The tears are in his eyes. His manly breast is heaving over his bursting soul. Retire, I am distant far; a wanderer in lands unknown. Though the race of kings are around me, yet my soul is dark. Why have our fathers been foes, Ton-thormod, love of maids!

Soft voice of the streamy isle, why dost thou mourn by night; the race of daring Trenmor are not the dark in soul. Thou shalt not wander, by streams unknown, blue eyed Oina-morul. Within this bosom is a voice; it comes not to other ears; it bids Ossian hear the hapeless, in their hour of woe. Retire, soft singer, by night; Ton-thormod shall not mourn on his rock.

With morning I loosed the king. I gave the long-haired maid. Mal-orchol heard my words, in the midst
of

of his echoing halls. " King of Fuarfed wild, why should Ton-thormod mourn? He is of the race of heroes, and a flame in war. Your fathers have been foes, but now their dim ghosts rejoice in death. They stretch their arms in mist to the same shell in Loda. Forget their rage, ye warriors, it was the cloud of other years."

Such were the deeds of Ossian, while yet his locks were young: though loveliness, with a robe of beams, clothed the daughter of many isles. We call back, maid of Lutha, the years that have rolled away.



COLNA-DONA:

A POEM.

THE ARGUMENT.

Fingal dispatches Ossian and Toscar to raise a stone, on the banks of the stream of Crona, to perpetuate the memory of a victory, which he had obtained in that place. When they were employed in that work, Car-ul, a neighbouring chief, invited them to a feast. They went: and Toscar fell desperately in love with Colna-dona, the daughter of Car-ul. Colna-dona became no less enamoured of Toscar. An incident, at an hunting party, brings their loves to a happy issue.

COL-AMON* of troubled streams, dark wanderer of distant vales, I behold thy course between trees, near Car-ul's echoing halls. There dwelt bright Colna-dona, the daughter of the king. Her eyes were rolling stars; her arms were white as the foam of streams. Her breast rose slowly to fight, like ocean's heaving wave. Her soul was a stream of light. Who, among the maids, was like the love of heroes?

Beneath

* Colna-dona signifies *the love of heroes*. Cola-mon, *narrow river*. Car-ul, *dark eyed*. Col-amon, the residence of Car-ul, was in the neighbourhood of Agricola's wall, towards the south. Car-ul seems to have been of the race of those Britons, who are distinguished by the name of *Maiatae*, by the writers of Rome. *Maiatae* is derived from two Gallic words, *Moi*, a *plain*, and *Aritich*, *inhabitants*; so that the signification of *Maiatae* is, *the inhabitants of the plain country*; a name given to the Britons who were settled in the low-lands, in contradistinction to the Caledonians, (i. e. CAEL-DON, *the Gauls of the hills*), who were possessed of the more mountainous division of North Britain.

Beneath the voice of the king, we moved to Crona * of the streams, Toscar of grassy Lutha, and Ossian, young in fields. Three bards attended with songs. Three bossy shields were borne before us: for we were to rear the stone, in memory of the past. By Crona's mossy course, Fingal had scattered his foes: he had rolled away the strangers, like a troubled sea. We came to the place of renown: from the mountains descended night. I tore an oak from its hill, and raised a flame on high. I bade my fathers to look down, from the clouds of their hall; for, at the fame of their race, they brighten in the wind.

I took a stone from the stream, amidst the song of bards. The blood of Fingal's foes hung curdled in its ooze. Beneath, I placed, at intervals, three bosses from the shields of foes, as rose or fell the sound of Ullin's nightly song. Toscar laid a dagger in earth, a mail of sounding steel. We raised the mould around the stone and bade it speak to other years.

Oozy daughter of streams, that now art reared on high, speak to the feeble, O stone, after Selma's race have failed! Prone, from the stormy night, the traveller shall lay him by thy side: thy whistling moss shall sound in his dreams; the years that were past shall return. Battles rise before him, blue-shielded kings.

* Crona, *murmuring*, was the name of a small stream, which discharged itself in the river Carron. It is often mentioned by Ossian, and the scenes of many of his poems are on its banks. The enemies, whom Fingal defeated here, are not mentioned. They were probably the provincial Britons. That tract of country between the Firths of Forth and Clyde, has been, through all antiquity, famous for battles and rencounters, between the different nations, who were possessed of North and South Britain. Stirling, a town situated there, derives its name from that very circumstance. It is a corruption of the Gallic name, STRILA, i. e. *the bill, or rock, of contention*.

kings descend to war: the darkened moon looks from heaven, on the troubled field. He shall burst, with morning, from dreams, and see the tombs of warriors round. He shall ask about the stone, and the aged will reply, "This gray stone was raised by Ossian, a chief of other years!"

From * Col-amon came a bard, from Car-ul, the friend of strangers. He bade us to the feast of kings, to the dwelling of bright Colna-dona. We went to the hall of harps. There Car-ul brightened between his aged locks, when he beheld the sons of his friends, like two young trees with their leaves.

Sons of the mighty, he said, ye bring back the days of old, when first I descended from waves, on Selma's streamy vale. I pursued Duth-mocarglos, dweller of ocean's wind. Our fathers had been foes, we met by Clutha's winding waters. He fled, along the sea, and my sails were spread behind him. Night deceived me, on the deep. I came to the dwelling of kings, to Selma of high-bosomed maids. Fingal came

* The manners of the Britons and Caledonians were so similar, in the days of Ossian, that there can be no doubt, that they were originally the same people, and descended from those Gauls who first possessed themselves of South-Britain, and gradually migrated to the north. This hypothesis is more rational than the idle fables of ill informed senachies, who bring the Caledonians from distant countries. The bare opinion of Tacitus, (which, by the bye, was only founded on a similarity of the personal figure of the Caledonians to the Germans of his own time) though it has staggered some learned men, is not sufficient to make us believe, that the ancient inhabitants of North-Britain were a German colony. A discussion of a point like this might be curious, but could never be satisfactory. Periods so distant are so involved in obscurity, that nothing certain can be now advanced concerning them. The light which the Roman writers hold forth is too feeble to guide us to the truth, through the darkness which has surrounded it.

came forth with his bards, and Conloch, arm of death. I feasted three days in the hall, and saw the blue eyes of Erin, Ros-crana, daughter of heroes, light of Cormac's race. Nor forgot did my steps depart: the kings gave their shields to Car-ul: they hang, on high, in Col-amon, in memory of the past. Sons of the daring kings, ye bring back the days of old.

Car-ul placed the oak of feasts. He took two bosses from our shields. He laid them in earth, beneath a stone, to speak to the hero's race. "When battle, said the king, shall roar, and our sons are to meet in wrath; my race shall look, perhaps, on this stone, when they prepare the spear. Have not our fathers met in peace, they will say, and lay aside the shield?"

Night came down. In her long locks moved the daughter of Car-ul. Mixed with the harp arose the voice of white-armed Colna-dona. Toscar darkened in his place, before the love of heroes. She came on his troubled soul, like a beam to the dark-heaving ocean: when it bursts from a cloud, and brightens the foamy side of a wave*.

* * * * *

With morning we awaked the woods; and hung forward on the path of the roes. They fell by their wonted streams. We returned through Crona's vale. From the wood a youth came forward, with a shield and pointless spear. "Whence, said Toscar of Lutha, is the flying beam? Dwells there peace at Col-amon, round bright Colna-dona of harps?"

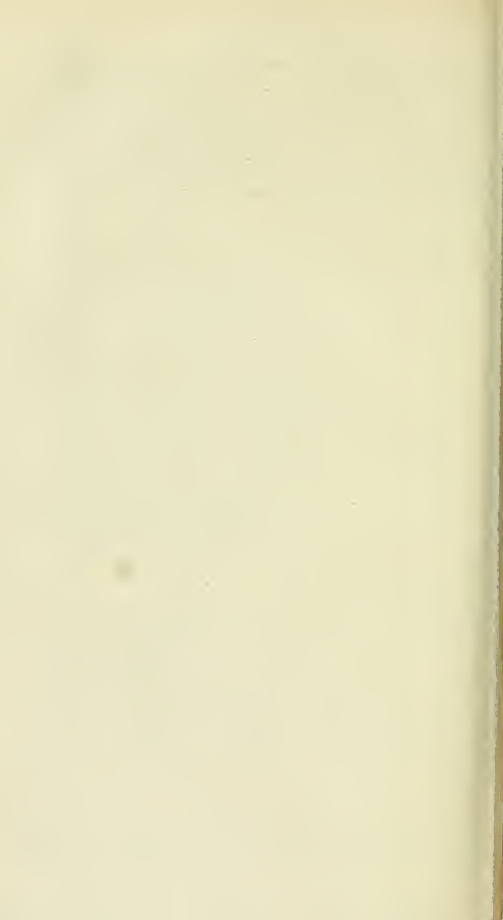
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* Here an episode is entirely lost: or at least is handed down so imperfectly, that it does not deserve a place in the poem.

By Col-amon of streams, said the youth, bright Colna-dona dwelt. She dwelt; but her course is now in desarts, with the son of the king; he that seized her soul as it wandered through the hall.

Stranger of tales, said Toscar, hast thou marked the warrior's course? He must fall; give thou that bossy shield! In wrath he took the shield. Fair behind it heaved the breasts of a maid, white as the bosom of a swan, rising on swift-rolling waves. It was Colna-dona of harps, the daughter of the king. Her blue eyes had rolled on Toscar, and her love arose.

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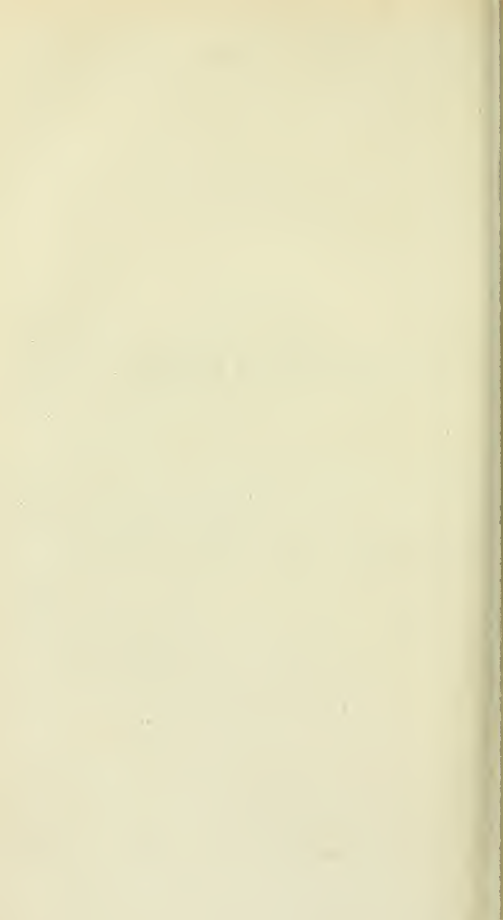
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THE history of those nations which originally possessed the north of Europe, is little known. Destitute of the use of letters, they themselves had not the means of transmitting their great actions to remote posterity. Foreign writers saw them only at a distance, and therefore their accounts are partial and indistinct. The vanity of the Romans induced them to consider the nations beyond the pale of their empire as barbarians; and consequently their history unworthy of being investigated. Some men, otherwise of great merit among ourselves, give into this confined opinion. Having early imbibed their idea of exalted merit from the Greek and Roman writers, they scarcely ever afterwards have the fortitude to allow any dignity of character to any other ancient people.

Without derogating from the fame of Greece and Rome, we may consider antiquity beyond the pale of their empire worthy of some attention. The nobler passions of the mind never shoot forth more free and unrestrained than in these times we call barbarous. That irregular manner of life, and those manly pursuits from which barbarity takes its name, are highly favourable to a strength of mind unknown in polished times. In advanced society the characters of men are more uniform and disguised. The human passions lie in some degree concealed behind forms, and

artificial manners; and the powers of the soul, without an opportunity of exerting them, lose their vigour. The times of regular government, and polished manners, are therefore to be wished for by the feeble and weak in mind. An unsettled state, and those convulsions which attend it, is the proper field for an exalted character, and the exertion of great parts. Merit there rises always superior; no fortuitous event can raise the timid and mean into power. To those who look upon antiquity in this light, it is an agreeable prospect; and they alone can have real pleasure in tracing nations to their source.

The establishment of the Celtic states, in the north of Europe, is beyond the reach of their written annals. The traditions and songs to which they trusted their history, were lost, or altogether corrupted in their revolutions and migrations, which were so frequent and universal, that no kingdom in Europe is now possessed by its original inhabitants. Societies were formed, and kingdoms erected, from a mixture of nations, who, in process of time, lost all knowledge of their own origin.

If tradition could be depended upon, it is only among a people, from all time free of intermixture with foreigners. We are to look for these among the mountains and inaccessible parts of a country: places, on account of their barrenness, uninviting to an enemy, or whose natural strength enabled the natives to repel invasions. Such are the inhabitants of the mountains of Scotland. We, accordingly, find, that they differ materially from those who possess the low and more fertile part of the kingdom. Their language is pure and original, and their manners are those of an ancient and unmixed race of men. Conscious of their own antiquity, they long despised others, as a new and mixed people. As they lived in a country only fit for pasture, they were free of that toil and business, which engross the attention of a commercial people. Their amusement
consisted

consisted in hearing or repeating their songs and traditions, and these entirely turned on the antiquity of their nation, and the exploits of their forefathers. It is no wonder, therefore, that there are more remains of antiquity among them, than among any other people in Europe. Traditions, however, concerning remote periods, are only to be regarded, in so far as they coincide with cotemporary writers of undoubted credit and veracity.

No writers began their accounts from a more early period, than the historians of the Scots nation. Without records, or even tradition itself, they give a long list of ancient kings, and a detail of their transactions, with a scrupulous exactness. One might naturally suppose, that, when they had no authentic annals, they should, at least, have recourse to the traditions of their country, and have reduced them into a regular system of history. Of both they seem to have been equally destitute. Born in the low country, and strangers to the ancient language of their nation, they contented themselves with copying from one another, and retailing the same fictions, in a new colour and dress.

John Fordun was the first who collected those fragments of the Scots history, which had escaped the brutal policy of Edward I. and reduced them into order. His accounts, in so far as they concerned recent transactions, deserve credit: beyond a certain period, they were fabulous and unsatisfactory. Some time before Fordun wrote, the king of England, in a letter to the Pope, had run up the antiquity of his nation to a very remote æra. Fordun, possessed of all the national prejudice of the age, was unwilling that his country should yield, in point of antiquity, to a people, then its rivals and enemies. Destitute of annals in Scotland, he had recourse to Ireland, which, according to the vulgar errors of the times, was reckoned the first habitation of the Scots. He found, there, that the Irish bards had carried their preten-

sions to antiquity as high, if not beyond any nation in Europe. It was from them he took those improbable fictions, which form the first part of his history.

The writers that succeeded Fordun implicitly followed his system, though they sometimes varied from him in their relations of particular transactions, and the order of succession of their kings. As they had no new lights, and were, equally with him, unacquainted with the traditions of their country, their histories contain little information concerning the origin of the Scots. Even Buchanan himself, except the elegance and vigour of his style, has very little to recommend him. Blinded with political prejudices, he seemed more anxious to turn the fictions of his predecessors to his own purposes, than to detect their misrepresentations, or investigate truth amidst the darkness which they had thrown round it. It therefore appears, that little can be collected from their own historians, concerning the first migration of the Scots into Britain.

That this island was peopled from Gaul admits of no doubt. Whether colonies came afterwards from the north of Europe is a matter of mere speculation. When South-Britain yielded to the power of the Romans, the unconquered nations to the north of the province were distinguished by the name of *Caledonians*. From their very name, it appears, that they were of those *Gauls*, who possessed themselves originally of Britain. It is compounded of two *Celtic* words, *Caël* signifying *Celts*, or *Gauls*, and *Dun*, or *Don*, a hill; so that *Caël-don*, or *Caledonians*, is as much as to say, the *Celts of the hill country*. The Highlanders to this day, call themselves *Caël*, their language *Caëlic*, or *Galic*, and their country *Caeldoch*, which the Romans softened into *Caledonia*. This, of itself, is sufficient to demonstrate, that they are the genuine descendents of the ancient *Caledonians*, and not a pretended colony of *Scots*, who settled first in the north, in the third or fourth century.

From

From the double meaning of the word *Cael*, which signifies *strangers*, as well as *Gauls* or *Celts*, some have imagined, that the ancestors of the Caledonians were of a different race from the rest of the Britons, and that they received their name upon that account. This opinion, say they, is supported by Tacitus, who, from several circumstances, concludes, that the Caledonians were of German extraction. A discussion of a point so intricate, at this distance of time, could neither be satisfactory nor important.

Towards the latter end of the third, and beginning of the fourth century, we meet with the *Scots* in the north. Porphyrius* makes the first mention of them about that time. As the *Scots* were not heard of before that period, most writers supposed them to have been a colony, newly come to Britain, and that the *Picts* were the only genuine descendents of the ancient Caledonians. This mistake is easily removed. The Caledonians, in process of time, became naturally divided into two distinct nations, as possessing parts of the country entirely different in their nature and soil. The western coast of Scotland is hilly and barren; towards the east the country is plain and fit for tillage. The inhabitants of the mountains, a roving and uncontrouled race of men, lived by feeding of cattle, and what they killed in hunting. Their employment did not fix them to one place. They removed from one heath to another, as suited best with their convenience or inclination. They were not, therefore, improperly called by their neighbours *SCUTE*, or the *wandering nation*; which is evidently the origin of the Roman name of *Scoti*.

On the other hand, the Caledonians, who possessed the east coast of Scotland, as the division of the country was plain and fertile, applied themselves to agriculture, and raising of corn. It was from this, that the Galic name of the *Picts* proceeded; for they are called, in that language, *Cruithnich*, i. e. *the wheat*

or

* St. Hierom. ad Ctesiphon.

or *corn-eaters*. As the Picts lived in a country so different in its nature from that possessed by the Scots, so their national character suffered a material change. Unobstructed by mountains, or lakes, their communication with another was free and frequent. Society, therefore, became sooner established among them than among the Scots, and, consequently, they were much sooner governed by civil magistrates and laws. This at last produced so great a difference in the manners of the two nations, that they began to forget their common origin, and almost continual quarrels and animosities subsisted between them. These animosities, after some ages, ended in the subversion of the Pictish kingdom, but not in the total extirpation of the nation, according to most of the Scots writers, who seemed to think it more for the honour of their countrymen, to annihilate, than reduce a rival people under their obedience. It is certain, however, that the very name of the Picts was lost, and those that remained were so completely incorporated with their conquerors, that they soon lost all memory of their own origin.

The end of the Pictish government is placed so near that period, to which authentic annals reach, that it is matter of wonder, that we have no monuments of their language or history remaining. This favours the system I have laid down. Had they originally been of a different race from the Scots, their language of course would be different. The contrary is the case. The names of places in the Pictish dominions, and the very names of their kings, which are handed down to us, are of Galic original, which is a convincing proof, that the two nations were, of old, one and the same, and only divided into two governments, by the effect which their situation had upon the genius of the people.

The name of *Picts* was, perhaps, given by the Romans to the Caledonians who possessed the east coast of Scotland, from their painting their bodies. This
circumstance

circumstance made some imagine, that the Picts were of British extract, and a different race of men from the Scots. That more of the Britons, who fled northward from the tyranny of the Romans, settled in the low country of Scotland, than among the Scots of the mountains, may be easily imagined, from the very nature of the country. It was they who introduced painting among the Picts. From this circumstance proceeded the name of the latter, to distinguish them from the Scots, who never had that art among them, and from the Britons, who discontinued it after the Roman conquest.

The Caledonians, most certainly acquired a considerable knowledge in navigation, by their living on a coast intersected with many arms of the sea, and in islands, divided, one from another, by wide and dangerous firths. It is, therefore, highly probable, that they very early found their way to the north of Ireland, which is within sight of their own country. That Ireland was first peopled from Britain is certain : The vicinity of the two islands ; the exact correspondence of the ancient inhabitants of both, in point of manners and language, are sufficient proofs, even if we had not the testimony of authors of undoubted veracity * to confirm it. The abettors of the most romantic systems of Irish antiquities allow it ; but they place the colony from Britain in an improbable and remote æra. I shall easily admit, that the colony of the *Firbolg*, confessedly the *Belgæ* of Britain, settled in the south of Ireland, before the *Cael*, or Caledonians discovered the north : but it is not at all likely, that the migration of the *Firbolg* to Ireland happened many centuries before the Christian æra.

Ossian, in the poem of Temora, [Book II.] throws considerable light on this subject. His accounts agree so well with what the ancients have delivered,

* Dio. Sic. l. 5.

livered, concerning the first population and inhabitants of Ireland, that every unbiaſed perſon will confeſs them more probable, than the legends handed down by tradition, in that country. From him, it appears, that in the days of Trathal, grandfather to Fingal, Ireland was poſſeſſed by two nations; the *Firbolg* or *Belgæ* of Britain, who inhabited the ſouth and the *Caël*, who paſſed over from Caledonia and the Hebrides to Ulſter. The two nations, as is uſual among an unpoliſhed and lately ſettled people, were divided into ſmall dynaſties, ſubject to petty kings or chiefs, independent of one another. In this ſituation, it is probable, they continued long, without any material revolution in the ſtate of the iſland, until Crothar, Lord of Atha, a country in Connaught the moſt potent chief of the *Firbolg*, carried away Conlama, the daughter of Cathmin, a chief of the *Caël* who poſſeſſed Ulſter.

Conlama had been betrothed, ſome time before to Turloch, a chief of their own nation. Turloch reſented the affront offered him by Crothar, made an irruption into Connaught, and killed Cormul, the brother of Crothar, who came to oppoſe his progreſs. Crothar himſelf then took arms and either killed or expelled Turloch. The war upon this, became general, between the two nations, and the *Caël* were reduced to the laſt extremity. In this ſituation, they applied, for aid, to Trathal king of Morven, who ſent his brother Conar, already famous for his great exploits, to their relief. Conar upon his arrival in Ulſter, was choſen king, by the unanimous conſent of the Caledonian tribes, who poſſeſſed that country. The war was renewed with vigour and ſucceſs; but the *Firbolg* appear to have been rather repelled than ſubdued. In ſucceeding reigns we learn from episodes in the ſame poem, that the chiefs of Atha made ſeveral efforts to become monarchs of Ireland, and to expel the race of Conar.

To

To Conar succeeded his son Cormac, [Book III.] who appears to have reigned long. In his latter days he seems to have been driven to the last extremity, by an insurrection of the *Firbolg*, who supported the pretensions of the chiefs of Atha to the Irish throne. Fingal, who then was very young, came to the aid of Cormac, totally defeated Colc-ulla, chief of Atha, and re-established Cormac in the sole possession of all Ireland. [Book IV.] It was then he fell in love with, and took to wife, Ros-crana, the daughter of Cormac, who was the mother of Ossian.

Cormac was succeeded in the Irish throne by his son, Cairbre; Cairbre by Atho, his son, who was the father of that Cormac, in whose minority the invasion of Swaran happened, which is the subject of the poem of *Fingal*. The family of Atha, who had not relinquished their pretensions to the Irish throne, rebelled in the minority of Cormac, defeated his adherents, and murdered him in the palace of Temora. [Book I.] Cairbar, lord of Atha, upon this, mounted the throne. His usurpation soon ended with his life; for Fingal made an expedition into Ireland, and restored, after various vicissitudes of fortune, the family of Conar to the possession of the kingdom. This war is the subject of Temora; the events, though certainly heightened, and embellished by poetry, seem, notwithstanding, to have their foundation in true history.

Ossian has not only preserved the history of the first migration of the Caledonians into Ireland, but has also delivered some important facts, concerning the first settlement of the *Firbolg*, or *Belgæ of Britain*, in that kingdom, under their leader Larthon, who was ancestor to Cairbar and Cathmor, who successively mounted the Irish throne, after the death of Cormac, the son of Artho. I forbear to transcribe the passage, on account of its length. [Book VII.] It is the song of Fonar, the bard; towards the latter end
of

of the seventh book of Temora. As the generation from Larthon to Cathmor, to whom the episode is addressed, are not marked, as are those of the family of Conar, the first king of Ireland, we can form no judgment of the time of the settlement of the Firbolg. It is, however, probable, it was some time before the *Cael*, or Caledonians, settled in Ulster. One important fact may be gathered from the history of Ossian, that the Irish had no king before the latter end of the first century. Fingal lived, it is certain, in the third century; so Conar, the first monarch of the Irish, who was his grand-uncle cannot be placed farther back than the close of the first. The establishing of this fact, lays, at once aside the pretended antiquities of the Scots and Irish and cuts off the long list of kings which the latter gave us for a millennium before.

Of the affairs of Scotland, it is certain, nothing can be depended upon prior to the reign of Fergus the son of Erc, who lived in the fifth century. The true history of Ireland begins somewhat later than that period. Sir James Ware*, who was indefatigable in his researches after the antiquities of his country, rejects, as mere fiction and idle romance all that is related of the ancient Irish, before the time of St. Patrick, and the reign of Leogaire. It is from this consideration, that he begins his history at the introduction of Christianity, remarking, that all that is delivered down concerning the times of Paganism were tales of late invention, strangely mixed with anachronisms and inconsistencies. Such being the opinion of Ware, who had collected with uncommon industry and zeal, all the real and pretended ancient manuscripts, concerning the history of his country, we may, on his authority, reject the improbable and self-condemned tales of Keating and O'Flaherty. Credulous and peurile to the last degree

* War. de Antiq. de Hyber. præ. p. 1.

gree, they have disgraced the antiquities they meant to establish. It is to be wished, that some able Irishman, who understands the language and records of his country, may redeem, ere it is too late, the genuine antiquities of Ireland, from the hands of these idle fabulists.

By comparing the history preserved by Ossian with the legends of the Scots and Irish writers, and, by afterwards examining both by the test of the Roman authors, it is easy to discover which is the most probable. Probability is all that can be established on the authority of tradition, ever dubious and uncertain. But when it favours the hypothesis laid down by cotemporary writers of undoubted veracity, and, as it were, finishes the figure of which they only draw the out-lines, it ought, in the judgment of sober reason, to be preferred to accounts framed in dark and distant periods, with little judgment, and upon no authority.

Concerning the period of more than a century, which intervenes between Fingal and the reign of Fergus, the son of Erc or Arcath, tradition is dark and contradictory. Some trace up the family of Fergus to a son of Fingal of that name, who makes a considerable figure in Ossian's poems. The three elder sons of Fingal, Ossian, Fillan, and Ryno, dying without issue, the succession, of course, devolved upon Fergus, the fourth son, and his posterity. This Fergus, say some traditions, was the father of Congal, whose son was Arcath, the father of Fergus, properly called the first king of Scots, as it was in his time the *Cael*, who possessed the western coast of Scotland, began to be distinguished, by foreigners, by the name of *Scots*. From thence forward, the Scots and Picts, as distinct nations, became objects of attention to the historians of other countries. The internal state of the two Caledonian kingdoms has always continued, and ever must remain, in obscurity and fable.

It is in this epoch we must fix the beginning of the decay of that species of heroism, which subsisted in the days of Ossian. There are three stages in human society. The first is the result of consanguinity, and the natural affection of the members of a family to one another. The second begins when property is established, and men enter into associations for mutual defence, against the invasions and injustice of neighbours. Mankind submit, in the third, to certain laws and subordinations of government, to which they trust the safety of their persons and property.

As the first is formed on nature, so, of course, it is the most disinterested and noble. Men, in the last, have leisure to cultivate the mind, and to restore it, with reflection, to a primæval dignity of sentiment. The middle state is the region of complete barbarism and ignorance. About the beginning of the fifth century, the Scots and Picts were advanced into the second stage, and, consequently, into those circumscribed sentiments, which always distinguish barbarity. The events which soon after happened did not at all contribute to enlarge their ideas, or mend their national character.

About the year 426, the Romans, on account of domestic commotions, entirely forsook Britain, finding it impossible to defend so distant a frontier. The Picts and Scots, seizing this favourable opportunity, made incursions into the deserted province. The Britons, enervated by the slavery of several centuries, and those vices, which are inseparable from an advanced state of civility, were not able to withstand the impetuous, though irregular, attacks of a barbarous enemy. In the utmost distress, they applied to their old masters, the Romans, and (after the unfortunate state of the empire could not spare aid) to the Saxons, a nation equally barbarous and brave, with the enemies of whom they were so much afraid. Though the bravery of the Saxons repelled the Caledonian nations for a time, yet the latter found
means

means to extend themselves considerably towards the south. It is in this period we must place the origin of the arts of civil life among the Scots. The seat of government was removed from the mountains to the plain and more fertile provinces of the south, to be near the common enemy, in case of sudden incursions.

Instead of roving through unfrequented wilds, in search of subsistence by means of hunting, men applied to agriculture, and raising of corn. This manner of life was the first means of changing the national character. The next thing which contributed to it was their mixture with strangers.

In the countries which the Scots had conquered from the Britons, it is probable the most of the old inhabitants remained. These incorporating with the conquerors, taught them agriculture, and other arts, which they themselves had received from the Romans. The Scots, however, in number as well as power, being the most predominant, retained still their language, and as many of the customs of their ancestors, as suited with the nature of the country they possessed. Even the union of the two Caledonian kingdoms did not much affect the national character. Being originally descended from the same stock, the manners of the Picts and Scots were as similar as the different natures of the countries they possessed permitted.

What brought about a total change in the genius of the Scots nation, was their wars, and other transactions with the Saxons. Several counties in the south of Scotland were alternately possessed by the two nations. They were ceded, in the ninth age, to the Scots, and, it is probable, that most of the Saxon inhabitants remained in possession of their lands. During the several conquests and revolutions in England, many fled for refuge into Scotland, to avoid the oppression of foreigners, or the tyranny of domestic usurpers; insomuch, that the Saxon race

formed perhaps near one half of the Scottish kingdom. The Saxon manners and language daily gained ground on the tongue and customs of the ancient Caledonians, till at last the latter were entirely relegated to inhabitants of the mountains, who were still unmixed with strangers.

It was after the accession of territory which the Scots received, upon the retreat of the Romans from Britain, that the inhabitants of the islands were divided into clans. The king, when he kept his court in the mountains, was considered, by the whole nation, as the chief of their blood. Their small number, as well as the presence of their prince, prevented those divisions which afterwards sprung forth into so many separate tribes. When the seat of government was removed to the south, those who remained in the Highlands, were, of course, neglected. They naturally formed themselves into small societies, independent of one another. Each society had its own *regulus*, who either was, or in the succession of a few generations, was regarded as chief of their blood. The nature of the country favoured an institution of this sort. A few valleys, divided from one another by extensive heaths, and impassible mountains, form the face of the Highlands. In these valleys the chiefs fixed their residence. Round them, and almost within sight of their dwellings, were the habitations of their relations and dependents.

The seats of the Highland chiefs were neither disagreeable nor inconvenient. Surrounded with mountains and hanging woods, they were covered from the inclemency of the weather. Near them generally ran a pretty large river, which, discharging itself not far off, into an arm of the sea, or extensive lake, swarmed with variety of fish. The woods were stocked with wild-fowl; and the heaths and mountains behind them were the natural seat of the red deer and roe. If we make allowance for the backward state of agriculture, the valleys were not unfertile; affording,

affording, if not all the conveniences, at least the necessities of life. Here the chief lived, the supreme judge and law-giver of his own people; but his sway was neither severe nor unjust. As the populace regarded him as the chief of their blood, so he, in return, considered them as members of his family. His commands, therefore, though absolute and decisive, partook more of the authority of a father, than of the rigour of a judge. Though the whole territory of the tribe was considered as the property of the chief, yet his vassals made him no other consideration for their lands than services, neither burdensome nor frequent. As he seldom went from home, he was at no expence. His table was supplied by his own herds, and what his numerous attendants killed in hunting.

In this rural kind of magnificence, the Highland chiefs lived, for many ages. At a distance from the seat of government, and secured by the inaccessibleness of their country, they were free and independent. As they had little communication with strangers, the customs of their ancestors remained among them, and their language retained its original purity. Naturally fond of military fame, and remarkably attached to the memory of their ancestors, they delighted in traditions and songs, concerning the exploits of their nation, and especially of their own particular families. A succession of bards was retained in every clan, to hand down the memorable actions of their forefathers. As the æra of Fingal, on account of Ossian's poems, was the most remarkable, and his chiefs the most renowned names in tradition, the bards took care to place one of them in the genealogy of every great family. That part of the poems, which concerned the hero who was regarded as ancestor, was preserved, as an authentic record of the antiquity of the family, and was delivered down, from race to race, with wonderful exactness.

The bards themselves, in the mean time, were not idle. They erected their immediate patrons into heroes, and celebrated them in their songs. As the circle of their knowledge was narrow, their ideas were confined in proportion. A few happy expressions, and the manners they represent, may please those who understand the language; their obscurity and inaccuracy would disgust in a translation. It was chiefly for this reason, that I kept wholly to the compositions of Ossian, in my former and present publication. As he acted in a more extensive sphere, his ideas are more noble and universal; neither has he so many of those peculiarities, which are only understood in a certain period or country. The other bards have their beauties, but not in that species of composition in which Ossian excels. Their rhymes, only calculated to kindle a martial spirit among the vulgar, afford very little pleasure to genuine taste. This observation only regards their poems of the heroic kind; in every other species of poetry they are more successful. They express the tender melancholy of desponding love, with irresistible simplicity and nature. So well adapted are the sounds of the words to the sentiments, that, even without any knowledge of the language, they pierce and dissolve the heart. Successful love is expressed with peculiar tenderness and elegance. In all their compositions, except the heroic, which was solely calculated to animate the vulgar, they give us the genuine language of the heart, without any of those affected ornaments of phraseology, which, though intended to beautify sentiments, divest them of their natural force. The ideas, it is confessed, are too local, to be admired, in another language; to those who are acquainted with the manners they represent, and the scenes they describe, they must afford the highest pleasure and satisfaction.

It was the locality of his description and sentiment, that probably kept Ossian so long in the obscurity of

an almost lost language. His ideas, though remarkably proper for the times in which he lived, are so contrary to the present advanced state of society, that more than a common mediocrity of taste is required, to relish his poems as they deserve. Those who alone were capable to make a translation, were, no doubt, conscious of this, and chose rather to admire their poet in secret, than see him received with coldness, in an English dress.

These were long my own sentiments, and accordingly, my first translations from the Galic, were merely accidental. The publication, which soon after followed, was so well received, that I was obliged to promise to my friends a larger collection. In a journey through the Highlands and isles, and, by the assistance of correspondents, since I left that country, all the genuine remains of the works of Ossian have come to my hands. In the preceding volume* complete poems were only given. Unfinished and imperfect poems were purposely omitted; even some pieces were rejected on account of their length, and others, that they might not break in upon that thread of connection, which subsists in the lesser compositions, subjoined to *Fingal*. That the comparative merit of pieces was not regarded, in the selection, will readily appear to those who shall read, attentively, the present collection. It is animated with the same spirit of poetry, and the same strength of sentiment is sustained throughout.

The opening of the poem of Temora made its appearance in the first collection of Ossian's works. The second book, and several other episodes, have only fallen into my hands lately. The story of the poem, with which I had been long acquainted, enabled me to reduce the broken members of the piece
into

* The Author alludes to the poems preceding Berrathon, as that poem, when the book was printed in two volumes, ended the first.

into the order in which they now appear. For the ease of the reader, I have divided myself into books, as I had done before with the poem of *Fingal*. As to the merit of the poem, I shall not anticipate the judgment of the public. My impartiality might be suspected in my accounts of a work, which, in some measure has become my own. If the poem of *Fingal* met with the applause of persons of genuine taste, I should also hope, that *Temora* will not displease them.

But what renders *Temora* infinitely more valuable than *Fingal*, is the light it throws on the history of the times. The first population of Ireland, its first kings, and several circumstances, which regard its connection of old with the south and north of Britain, are presented to us, in several episodes. The subject and catastrophe of the poem are founded upon facts, which regarded the first peopling of that country, and the contests between the two British nations, which originally inhabited. In a preceding part of this Dissertation, I have shewn how superior the probability of Ossian's traditions is to the undigested fictions of the Irish bards, and the more recent and regular legends of both Irish and Scottish historians. I mean not to give offence to the abettors of the high antiquities of the two nations, though I have all along expressed my doubts, concerning the veracity and abilities of those who deliver down their ancient history. For my own part, I prefer the national fame, arising from a few certain facts, to the legendary and uncertain annals of ages of remote and obscure antiquity. No kingdom now established in Europe, can pretend to equal antiquity with that of the Scots, even according to my system, so that it is altogether needless to fix their origin a fictitious millennium before.

Since the publication of the poems contained in the first volume, many insinuations have been made, and doubts arisen, concerning their authenticity. I shall,

shall, probably, hear more of the same kind after the present poems shall make their appearance. Whether these suspicions are suggested by prejudice, or are only the effects of ignorance of facts, I shall not pretend to determine. To me they give no concern, as I have it always in my power to remove them. An incredulity of this kind is natural to persons, who confine all merit to their own age and country. These are generally the weakest, as well as the most ignorant, of the people. Indolently confined to a place, their ideas are narrow and circumscribed. It is ridiculous enough to see such people as these are, branding their ancestors, with the despicable appellation of barbarians. Sober reason can easily discern, where the title ought to be fixed with more propriety.

As prejudice is always the effect of ignorance, the knowing, the men of true taste, despise and dismiss it. If the poetry is good, and the characters natural and striking, to them it is a matter of indifference, whether the heroes were born in the little village of Argles in Jutland, or natives of the barren heaths of Caledonia. That honour which nations derive from ancestors, worthy or renowned, is merely ideal. It may buoy up the minds of individuals, but it contributes very little to their importance in the eyes of others. But of all those prejudices which are incident to narrow minds, that which measures the merit of performances by a vulgar opinion, concerning the country which produced them, is certainly the most ridiculous. Ridiculous, however, as it is, few have the courage to reject it; and I am thoroughly convinced, that a few quaint lines of a Roman or Greek epigrammatist, if dug out of the ruins of Herculaneum, would meet with more cordial and universal applause, than all the most beautiful and natural rhapsodies of all the Celtic bards and Scandinavian scalds that ever existed.

While

While some doubt the authenticity of the compositions of Ossian, others strenuously endeavour to appropriate them to the Irish nation. Though the whole tenor of the poems sufficiently contradict so absurd an opinion, it may not be improper, for the satisfaction of some, to examine the narrow foundation, on which this extraordinary claim is built.

Of all the nations descended from the ancient *Celtæ*, the Scots and Irish are the most similar in language, customs, and manners. This argues a more intimate connection between them, than a remote descent from the great Celtic stock. It is evident, in short, that at some one period or other, they formed one society, were subject to the same government, and were, in all respects, one and the same people. How they became divided, which the colony, or which the mother nation, does not fall now to be discussed. The first circumstance that induced me to disregard the vulgarly-received opinion of the Hibernian extraction of the Scottish nation, was my observations on their ancient language. That dialect of the Celtic tongue, spoken in the north of Scotland, is much more pure, more agreeable to its mother language, and more abounding with primitives, than that now spoken, or even that which has been writ for some centuries back, amongst the most unmixed part of the Irish nation. A Scotman, tolerably conversant in his own language, understands an Irish composition from that derivative analogy which it has to the *Galic* of North Britain. An Irishman, on the other hand without the aid of study, can never understand a composition in the *Galic* tongue. This affords a proof, that the *Scots Galic* is the most original, and consequently the language of a more ancient and unmixed people. The Irish, however backward they may be to allow any thing to the prejudice of their antiquity, seem inadvertently to acknowledge it, by the very appellation they give to the dialect they speak. They call their own language *Caelic Eirinnach*

i. e. *Caledonian Irish*, when, on the contrary, they call the dialect of North-Britain, a *Chaelic*, or the *Caledonian tongue*, emphatically. A circumstance of this nature tends more to decide which is the most ancient nation, than the united testimonies of a whole legion of ignorant bards and *senachies*, who, perhaps never dreamed of bringing the Scots from Spain to Ireland, till some one of them, more learned than the rest, discovered, that the Romans called the first *Ibera*, and the latter *Hibernia*. On such a slight foundation were probably built those romantic fictions, concerning the Milesians of Ireland.

From internal proofs it sufficiently appears, that the poems published under the name of Ossian, are not of Irish composition. The favourite chimæra, that Ireland is the mother-country, of the Scots, is totally subverted and ruined. The fictions concerning the antiquities of that country, which were forming for ages, and growing as they came down, on the hands of successive *senachies* and *fileas*, are found, at last to be the spurious brood of modern and ignorant ages. To those who know how tenacious the Irish are, of their pretended *Iberian* descent, this alone is proof sufficient, that poems, so subversive of their system, could never be produced by an *Hibernian* bard. But when we look to the language, it is so different from the Irish dialect, that it would be as ridiculous to think, that Milton's *Paradise Lost* could be wrote by a Scottish peasant, as to suppose, that the poems ascribed to Ossian were writ in Ireland.

The pretensions of Ireland to Ossian proceed from another quarter. There are handed down in that country, traditional poems, concerning the *Fiona*, or the heroes of *Fion Mac Comnal*. This *Fion*, say the Irish annalists, was general of the militia of Ireland, in the reign of Cormac, in the third century. Where Keating and O'Flaherty learned that Ireland had an embodied militia so early, is not easy for me to determine.

mine. Their information certainly did not come from the Irish poems, concerning *Fion*. I have just now in my hands all that remain of those compositions; but, unluckily for the antiquities of Ireland, they appear to be the work of a very modern period. Every stanza, nay almost every line, affords striking proofs, that they cannot be three centuries old. Their allusions to the manners and customs of the fifteenth century, are so many, that it is matter of wonder to me, how any one could dream of their antiquity. They are entirely writ in that romantic taste which prevailed two ages ago. Giants, enchanted castles, dwarfs, palfreys, witches and magicians, form the whole circle of the poet's invention. The celebrated *Fion* could scarcely move from one hillock to another, without encountering a giant, or being entangled in the circles of a magician. Witches, on broomsticks, were continually hovering round him like crows; and he had freed enchanted virgins in every valley in Ireland. In short, *Fion*, great as he was, passed a disagreeable life. Not only had he to engage all the mischiefs in his own country, foreign armies invaded him, assisted by magicians and witches, and headed by kings as tall as the mainmast of a first rate. It must be owned, however, that *Fion* was not inferior to them in height.

A chos air *Cromleach*, druim-ard,
 Chos eile air *Crom-meal* dubh,
 Thoga *Fion* le lamh mhoir
 An d'uisgeo *Lubbair* na fruth.
 With one foot on *Cromleach* his brow,
 The other on *Crommal* the dark,
Fion took up with his large hand
 The water from *Lubar* of the streams.

Cromleach and *Crommal* were two mountains in the neighbourhood of one another, in Ulster, and the river *Lubar* ran through the intermediate valley. The property of such a monster as this *Fion*, I should never have disputed with any nation. But the bard himself,

himself, in the poem, from which the above quotation is taken, cedes him to Scotland.

FION O ALBIN, fiol nan laoich.

FION from ALBION, race of heroes!

Were it allowable to contradict the authority of a bard, at this distance of time, I should have given as my opinion, that this enormous *Fion* was of the race of the Hibernian giants, of Ruanus, or some other celebrated name, rather than a native of Caledonia, whose inhabitants, now at least, are not remarkable for their stature.

If *Fion* was so remarkable for his stature, his heroes had also other extraordinary properties. *In weight all the sons of strangers yielded to the celebrated Ton-iosal; and for hardness of skull, and, perhaps, for thickness too, the valiant Oscar stood unrivalled and alone.* Ossian himself had many singular and less delicate qualifications, than playing on the harp; and the brave Cuchullin was of so diminutive a size, as to be taken for a child of two years of age, by the gigantic Swaran. To illustrate this subject, I shall here lay before the reader, the history of some of the Irish poems, concerning *Fion Mac Comhal*. A translation of these pieces, if well executed, might afford satisfaction to the public. But this ought to be the work of a native of Ireland. To draw forth, from obscurity, the poems of my own country, has afforded ample employment to me; besides, I am too diffident of my own abilities, to undertake such a work. A gentleman in Dublin accused me to the public of committing blunders and absurdities, in translating the language of my own country, and that before any translation of mine appeared*. How the gentleman came to see my blunders before I committed them, is not easy to determine; if he did not con-

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P

clude,

* In Faulkner's Dublin Journal, of the 1st December, 1761, appeared the following Advertisement:—

“ Speedily

clude, that, as a Scotsman, and of course descended of the Milesian race, I might have committed some of those oversights, which perhaps very unjustly, are said to be peculiar to them.

From the whole tenor of the Irish poems, concerning the *Fiona*, it appears, that *Fion Mac Comnal* flourished in the reign of Cormac, which is placed by the universal consent of the senachies, in the third century. They even fix the death of Fingal in the year 286, yet his son Ossian is made cotemporary with St. Patrick, who preached the gospel in Ireland about the middle of the fifth age. Ossian, though, at that time, he must have been two hundred and fifty years of age, had a daughter young enough to become wife to the saint. On account of this family connection, *Patrick of the Psalms*, for so the apostle of Ireland is emphatically called in the poems, took great delight in the company of Ossian, and in hearing the great actions of his family. The saint sometimes threw off the austerity of his profession, drunk freely and had his soul properly warmed with wine, in order to hear, with becoming enthusiasm, the poems.

O.

“Speedily will be published, by a gentleman of this kingdom, who hath been, for some time past, employed in translating and writing Historical Notes to

F I N G A L :

A P O E M,

(Originally wrote in the Irish or Erse language.)

In the preface to which, the translator, who is a perfect master of the Irish tongue, will give an account of the manners and customs of the ancient Irish or Scots: and, therefore, most humbly entreats the public, to wait for his edition, which will appear in a short time, as he will set forth all the blunders and absurdities in the edition now printing in London, and shew the ignorance of the English translator, in his knowledge of Irish grammar, no understanding any part of that accidence.”

of his father-in-law. One of the poems begins with this piece of useful information.

Lo don rabh PADRIC na inhur,
 Gun *Sailm* air uidh, ach a gol,
 Ghluais e thigh *Ossian* mhic *Fhion*,
 O san leis bu bhinn a ghloir.

The title of this poem is *Tcantach mor na Fionna*. It appears to have been founded on the same story with the *battle of Lora*, one of the poems of the genuine Ossian. The circumstances and catastrophe in both are much the same; but the *Irish Ossian* discovers the age in which he lived, by an unlucky anachronism. After describing the total route of Erragon, he very gravely concludes with this remarkable anecdote, "That none of the foe escaped, but a few who were allowed to go on a pilgrimage to the *Holy Land*." This circumstance fixes the date of the composition of the piece some centuries after the famous croisade; for, it is evident, that the poet thought the time of the croisade so ancient, that he confounds it with the age of Fingal. Erragon, in the course of this poem, is often called,

Roigh *Loeklin* an do shloigh,
 King of *Denmark* of two nations,

which alludes to the union of the kingdoms of Norway and Denmark, a circumstance which brings down the date of the piece to an æra, not far remote. Modern, however, as this pretended Ossian was, it is certain, he lived before the Irish had dreamed of appropriating *Fion* or *Fingal*, to themselves. He concludes the poem with this reflection.

Na fagha se comhthrom nan n' arm,
 Erragon Mac Annir nan lann glas
 'San n'ALBIN ni n' abairtair Triath
 Agus ghlaoite an n' *Fhiona* as.

"Had Erragon, son of Annir of gleaming swords,
 avoided the equal contest of arms, (single combat) no

chief should afterwards have been numbered in ALBION, and the heroes of Fion should no more be named."

The next poem that falls under our observation, is *Cath-cabhra*, or, *The Death of Oscar*. This piece is founded on the same story which we have in the first book of Temora. So little thought the author of *Cath-cabhra* of making Oscar his countryman, that, in the course of two hundred lines, of which the poem consists, he puts the following expression thrice in the mouth of the hero:

ALBION an sa d' roina m' arach.—

ALBION where I was born and bred.

The poem contains almost all the incidents in the first book of Temora. In one circumstance the bard differs materially from Ossian. Oscar, after he was mortally wounded by Cairbar, was carried by his people to a neighbouring hills, which commanded a prospect of the sea. A fleet appeared at a distance, and the hero exclaims with joy,

Loingeas mo shean-athair at' an

'S iad a tiachd le cabhair chugain,

O ALBIN na n' ioma stuagh.

"It is the fleet of my grandfather, coming with aid to our field, from ALBION of many waves!" The testimony of this bard is sufficient to confute the idle fictions of Keating and O'Flaherty; for, though he is far from being ancient, it is probable he flourished a full century before these historians. He appears, however, to have been a much better Christian than Chronologer; for *Fion*, though he is placed two centuries before St. Patrick, very devoutly recommends the soul of his grandson to his Redeemer.

Duan a Charilh Mac Stavn is another Irish poem in high repute. The grandeur of its images, and its propriety of sentiment, might have induced me to give

give a translation of it, had not I some expectations of seeing it in the collection of the Irish Ossian's poems, promised more than a year since to the public. The author descends sometimes from the region of the sublime to low and indecent description; the last of which, the Irish translator, no doubt, will choose to leave in the obscurity of the original. In this piece, Cuchullin is used with very little ceremony; for he is oft called the *Dog of Tara*, in the county of Meath. This severe title of the *redoubtable Cuchullin*, the most renowned of Irish champions, proceeded from the poet's ignorance of etymology. Cu, *voice*, or commander, signifies also a *dog*. The poet chose the last, as the most noble appellation for his hero.

The subject of the poem is the same with that of the epic poem of Fingal. *Garibh Mac-Starn* is the same with Ossian's Swaran, the son of Starno. His single combats with, and his victory over all the heroes of Ireland, excepting the *celebrated dog of Tara*, i. e. Cuchullin, afford matter for two hundred lines of tolerable poetry. *Garibh's* progress in search of Cuchullin, and his intrigue with the gigantic Emir-bragal, that hero's wife, enables the poet to extend his piece to four hundred lines. This author, it is true, makes Cuchullin a native of Ireland; the gigantic Emir-bragal, he calls *the guiding star of the women of Ireland*. The property of this enormous lady, I shall not dispute with him, or any other. But, as he speaks with great tenderness of the *daughters of the convent*, and throws out some hints against the English nation, it is probable he lived in two modern a period to be intimately acquainted with the genealogy of Cuchullin.

Another Irish Ossian, for there were many, as appears from their difference in language and sentiment, speaks very dogmatically of *Fion Mac Comnal*, as an Irishman. Little can be said for the judgment of

this poet, and less for his delicacy of sentiment. The history of one of his episodes may, at once, stand as a specimen of his want of both. Ireland, in the days of *Fion*, happened to be threatened with an invasion, by three great potentates, the kings of Lochlin, Sweden, and France. It is needless to insist upon the impropriety of a French invasion of Ireland; it is sufficient for me to be faithful to the language of my author. *Fion*, upon receiving intelligence of the intended invasion, sent Ca-olt, Ossian, and Oscar, to watch the bay, in which it was apprehended the enemy were to land. Oscar was the worst choice of a scout that could be made; for, brave as he was, he had the bad property of falling very often asleep on his post, nor was it possible to awake him, without cutting off one of his fingers, or dashing a large stone against his head. When the enemy appeared, Oscar, very unfortunately, was asleep. Ossian and Ca-olt consulted about the method of waking him, and they, at last, fixed on the stone, as the less dangerous expedient.

Gun thog Caoilte a chlach, nach gan,
 Agus a n' aighai' chican gun bhuail;
 Tri mil an tulloch gun chri', &c.

“Ca-olt took up a heavy stone, and struck it against the hero's head. The hill shook for three miles, as the stone rebounded and rolled away.” Oscar rose in wrath, and his father gravely desired him to spend his rage on his enemies, which he did to so good purpose, that he singly routed a whole wing of their army. The confederate kings advanced, notwithstanding, till they came to a narrow pass, possessed by the celebrated Ton-iosal. This name is very significant of the singular property of the hero who bore it. Ton-iosal, though brave, was so heavy and unweildy, that, when he sat down, it took the whole force of a hundred men to set him upright on his feet

feet again. Luckily for the preservation of Ireland, the hero happened to be standing when the enemy appeared, and he gave so good an account of them, that *Fion*, upon his arrival, found little to do, but to divide the spoil among his soldiers.

All these extraordinary heroes, *Fion*, *Ossian*, *Oscar*, and *Ca-olt*, says the poet, were

Siol ERIN na gorm lann.

The sons of ERIN of blue steel.

Neither shall I much dispute the matter with him : He has my consent also to appropriate to Ireland the celebrated *Ton-iosal*. I shall only say, that they are different persons of the same name, in the Scots poems; and that, though the stupendous valour of the first is so remarkable, they have not been equally lucky with the latter, in their poet. It is somewhat extraordinary, that *Fion*, who lived some ages before St. Patrick, swears like a very good Christian.

Air an Dia do chum gach case.

By God, who shaped every case.

It is worthy of being remarked, that, in the line quoted, *Ossian*, who lived in St. Patrick's days, seems to have understood something of the English, a language not then subsisting. A person, more sanguine for the honour of his country than I am, might argue, from this circumstance, that this pretendedly Irish *Ossian* was a native of Scotland; for my countrymen are universally allowed to have an exclusive right to the second-sight.

From the instances given, the reader may form a complete idea of the Irish compositions concerning the *Fiona*. The greatest part of them make the heroes of *Fion*,

Siol ALBIN a n'nioma caoile.

The race of ALBION of many firths.

The rest make them natives of Ireland. But, the truth is, that their authority is of little consequence on either side. From the instances I have given, they appear to have been the work of a very modern period. The pious ejaculations they contain, their allusions to the manners of the times; fix them to the fifteenth century. Had even the authors of these pieces avoided all allusions to their own times, it is impossible that the poems could pass for ancient, in the eyes of any person tolerably conversant with the Irish tongue. The idiom is so corrupted, and so many words borrowed from the English, that that language must have made considerable progress in Ireland before the poems were written.

It remains now to shew, how the Irish bards began to appropriate Ossian and his heroes to their own country. After the English conquest, many of the natives of Ireland, averse to a foreign yoke, either actually were in a state of hostility with the conquerors, or at least, paid little regard to their government. The Scots, in those ages, were often in open war, and never in cordial friendship with the English. The similarity of manners and language, the traditions concerning their common origin, and, above all, their having to do with the same enemy, created a free and friendly intercourse between the Scottish and Irish nations. As the custom of retaining bards and senachies was common to both; so each, no doubt, had formed a system of history, it matters not how much soever fabulous, concerning their respective origin. It was the natural policy of the times, to reconcile the traditions of both nations together, and, if possible, to deduce them from the same original stock.

The Saxon manners and language had, at that time, made great progress in the south of Scotland. The ancient language, and the traditional history of
the

the nation, became confined entirely to the inhabitants of the Highlands, then fallen, from several concurring circumstances, into the last degree of ignorance and barbarism. The Irish, who, for some ages before the conquest, had possessed a competent share of that kind of learning, which then prevailed in Europe, found it no difficult matter to impose their own fictions on the ignorant Highland senachies, by flattering the vanity of the Highlanders, with their long list of Heremonian kings and heroes, they, without contradiction, assumed to themselves the character of being the mother-nation of the Scots of Britain. At this time, certainly, was established that Hibernian system of the original of the Scots, which afterwards, for want of any other, was universally received. The Scots of the low country, who, by losing the language of their ancestors, lost, together with it their national traditions, received, implicitly, the history of their country, from Irish refugees, or from Highland senachies, persuaded over into the Hibernian system.

These circumstances are far from being ideal. We have remaining many particular traditions, which bear testimony to a fact, of itself abundantly probable. What makes the matter incontestible is; that the ancient traditional accounts of the genuine origin of the Scots, have been handed down without interruption. Though a few ignorant senachies might be persuaded out of their own opinion, by the smoothness of an Irish tale, it was impossible to eradicate, from among the bulk of the people, their own national traditions. These traditions afterwards so much prevailed, that the Highlanders continue totally unacquainted with the pretended Hibernian extract of the Scots nation. Ignorant chronicle writers, strangers to the ancient language of their country, preserved only from fallen to the ground so improbable a story.

It was during the period I have mentioned, that the Irish became acquainted with, and carried into their country, the compositions of Ossian. The scene of many of the pieces being in Ireland, suggested first to them a hint, of making both heroes and poet natives of that island. In order to do this effectually, they found it necessary to reject the genuine poems, as every line was pregnant with proofs of their Scottish original, and to dress up a fable, on the same subject, in their own language. So ill qualified, however, were their bards to effectuate this change, that amidst all their desires to make the *Fiona* Irishmen, they every now and then called them *Síol Aibin*. It was, probably, after a succession of some generations, that the bards had effrontry enough to establish an Irish genealogy for *Fion*, and deduce him from the Milesian race of kings. In some of the oldest Irish poems, on the subject, the great grandfather of *Fion* is made a Scandinavian; and his heroes are often called *SIOL LOCHLIN NA BEUM*; *i. e.* the race of Lochlin of wounds. The only poem that runs up the family of *Fion* to Nuades Niveus, king of Ireland, is evidently not above a hundred and fifty years old; for, if I mistake not, it mentions the Earl of Tyrone, so famous in Elizabeth's time.

This subject, perhaps, is pursued farther than it deserves; but a discussion of the pretensions of Ireland to Ossian, was become in some measure necessary. If the Irish poems, concerning the *Fiona*, should appear ridiculous, it is but justice to observe, that they are scarcely more so than the poems of other nations at that period. On other subjects, the bards of Ireland have displayed a genius worthy of any age or nation. It was, alone, in matters of antiquity, that they were monstrous in their fables. Their love-sonnets, and their elegies on the death of persons worthy or renowned, abound with such beautiful simplicity of sentiment, and wild harmony

mony of numbers, that they become more than an atonement for their errors, in every other species of poetry. But the beauty of these pieces, depend so much on a certain *curiosa felicitas* of expression in the original, that they must appear much to disadvantage in another language.

A CRITICAL

A
CRITICAL DISSERTATION
ON THE
POEMS OF OSSIAN,
THE
SON OF FINGAL.

BY HUGH BLAIR, D. D.

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SON OF FINGAL.

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AMONG the monuments remaining of the ancient state of nations, few are more valuable than their poems or songs. History, when it treats of remote and dark ages, is seldom very instructive. The beginnings of society, in every country, are involved in fabulous confusion; and though they were not, they would furnish few events worth recording. But, in every period of society, human manners are a curious spectacle; and the most natural pictures of ancient manners are exhibited in the ancient poems of nations. These present to us, what is much more valuable than the history of such transactions as a rude age can afford, The history of human imagination and passion. They make us acquainted with the notions and feelings of our fellow-creatures in the most artless ages; discovering what objects they admired, and what pleasures they pursued, before those refinements of society had taken place, which enlarge indeed and diversify the transactions, but disguise the manners of mankind.

Besides this merit, which ancient poems have with philosophical observers of human nature, they have another with persons of taste. They promise

some of the highest beauties of poetical writing. Irregular and unpolished we may expect the productions of uncultivated ages to be; but abounding, at the same time, with that enthusiasm, that vehemence and fire, which are the soul of poetry. For many circumstances of those times which we call barbarous, are favourable to the poetical spirit. That state, in which human nature shoots wild and free, though unfit for other improvements, certainly encourages the high exertions of fancy and passion.

In the infancy of societies, men live scattered and dispersed, in the midst of solitary rural scenes, where the beauties of nature are their chief entertainment. They meet with many objects, to them new and strange; their wonder and surprise are frequently excited; and by the sudden changes of fortune occurring in their unsettled state of life, their passions are raised to the utmost. Their passions have nothing to restrain them: their imagination has nothing to check it. They display themselves to one another without disguise: and converse and act in the uncovoured simplicity of nature. As their feelings are strong, so their language, of itself, assumes a poetical turn. Prone to exaggerate, they describe every thing in the strongest colours; which, of course, renders their speech picturesque and figurative. Figurative language owes its rise chiefly to two causes; to the want of proper names for objects, and to the influence of imagination and passion over the form of expression. Both these causes concur in the infancy of society. Figures are commonly considered as artificial modes of speech, devised by orators and poets, after the world had advanced to a refined state. The contrary of this is the truth. Men never have used so many figures of style, as in those rude ages, when, besides the power of a warm imagination to suggest lively images, the want of proper and precise terms for the ideas they would express, obliged them to have recourse to circumlocution, metaphor, comparison, and all those substituted forms of expression, which

which give a poetical air to language. An American chief, at this day, harangues at the head of his tribe, in a more bold metaphorical style, than a modern European would adventure to use in an epic poem.

In the progress of society, the genius and manners of men undergo a change more favourable to accuracy than to sprightliness and sublimity. As the world advances, the understanding gains ground upon the imagination; the understanding is more exercised; the imagination less. Fewer objects occur that are new or surprising. Men apply themselves to trace the causes of things; they correct and refine one another; they subdue or disguise their passions; they form their exterior manners upon one uniform standard of politeness and civility. Human nature is pruned according to method and rule. Language advances from sterility to copiousness, and, at the same time, from fervour and enthusiasm, to correctness and precision. Style becomes more chaste; but less animated. The progress of the world in this respect resembles the progress of age in man. The powers of imagination are most vigorous and predominant in youth; those of the understanding ripen more slowly, and often attain not their maturity, till the imagination begin to flag. Hence, poetry, which is the child of imagination, is frequently most glowing and animated in the first ages of society. As the ideas of our youth are remembered with a peculiar pleasure on account of their liveliness and vivacity; so the most ancient poems have often proved the greatest favourites of nations.

Poetry has been said to be more ancient than prose; and however paradoxical such an assertion may seem, yet, in a qualified sense, it is true. Men certainly never conversed with one another in regular numbers; but even their ordinary language would, in ancient times, for the reasons before assigned, ap-

proach to a poetical style; and the first compositions transmitted to posterity, beyond doubt, were, in a literal sense, poems; that is, compositions in which imagination had the chief hand, formed into some kind of numbers, and pronounced with a musical modulation or tone. Music or song has been found coæval with society among the most barbarous nations. The only subjects which could prompt men, in their first rude state, to utter their thoughts in compositions of any length, were such as naturally assumed the tone of poetry; praises of their gods, or of their ancestors; commemorations of their own warlike exploits; or lamentations over their misfortunes. And before writing was invented, no other compositions, except songs or poems, could take such hold of the imagination and memory, as to be preserved by oral tradition, and handed down from one race to another.

Hence we may expect to find poems among the antiquities of all nations. It is probable too, that an extensive search would discover a certain degree of resemblance among all the most ancient poetical productions, from whatever country they have proceeded. In a similar state of manners, similar objects and passions operating upon the imaginations of men, will stamp their productions with the same general character. Some diversity will, no doubt, be occasioned by climate and genius. But mankind never bear such resembling features, as they do in the beginnings of society. Its subsequent revolutions give rise to the principal distinctions among nations; and divert, into channels widely separated, that current of human genius and manners which descends originally from one spring. What we have been long accustomed to call the oriental vein of poetry, because some of the earliest poetical productions have come to us from the East, is probably no more oriental than accidental; it is characteristic of an age rather

ther than a country ; and belongs, in some measure, to all nations at a certain period. Of this the works of Ossian seem to furnish a remarkable proof.

Our present subject leads us to investigate the ancient poetical remains, not so much of the East, or of the Greeks and Romans, as of the Northern nations ; in order to discover whether the Gothic poetry has any resemblance to the Celtic or Galic, which we are about to consider. Though the Goths, under which name we usually comprehend all the Scandinavian tribes, were a people altogether fierce and martial, and noted, to a proverb, for their ignorance of the liberal arts, yet they too, from the earliest times, had their poets and their songs. Their poets were distinguished by the title of *Scalders*, and their songs were termed *Vyses* *. Saxo Grammaticus, a Danish historian

* Olaus Wormius, in the Appendix to his *Treatise de Literatura Runica*, has given a particular account of the Gothic poetry, commonly called Runic, from *Runes*, which signifies the Gothic letters. He informs us that there were no fewer than one hundred and thirty-six different kinds of measure or verse used in their *Vyses* ; and though we are accustomed to call rhyme a Gothic invention, he says expressly, that among all these measures, rhyme, or correspondence of final syllables, was never employed. He analyses the structure of one of these kinds of verse, that in which the poem of Lodbrog, afterwards quoted is written ; which exhibits a very singular species of harmony, if it can be allowed that name, depending neither upon rhyme nor upon metrical feet, or quantity of syllables, but chiefly upon the number of the syllables, and the disposition of the letters. In every stanza was an equal number of lines ; in every line six syllables. In each distich, it was requisite that three words should begin with the same letter ; two of the corresponding words placed in the first line of the distich, the third, in the second line. In each line were also required two syllables, but never the final ones formed either of the same consonants, or

same

historian of considerable note, who flourished in the thirteenth century, informs us that very many of these songs, containing the ancient traditionary stories of the country, were found engraven upon rocks in the old Runic character; several of which he has translated into Latin, and inserted into his history. But his versions are plainly so paraphrastical, and forced into such an imitation of the style and the measures of the Roman poets, that one can form no judgment from them of the native spirit of the original. A more curious monument of the true Gothic poetry is preserved by Olaus Wormius in his book *de Literatura Runica*. It is an Epicedium, or funeral song, composed by Regner Lodbrog; and

same vowels. As an example of this measure, Olaus gives us these two Latin lines constructed exactly according to the above rules of Runic verse:—

Christus caput nostrum
Coronet te bonis.

The initial letters of *Christus Caput* and *Coronet*, make the three corresponding letters of the distich. In the first line, the first syllables of *Christus* and of *nostrum*; in the second line, the *on* in *coronet* and in *bonis* make the requisite correspondence of syllables. Frequent inversions and transpositions were permitted in this poetry, which would naturally follow from such laborious attention to the collocation of words.

The curious on this subject may consult likewise Dr. Hicks's *Thesaurus Linguarum Septentrionalium*; particularly the 23d chapter of his *Grammatica Anglo Saxonica et Mæso Gothica*; where they will find a full account of the structure of the Anglo-Saxon verse, which nearly resembled the Gothic. They will find also some specimens both of Gothic and Saxon poetry. An extract, which Dr. Hicks has given from the work of one of the Danish Scalders, intitled, *Hervarer Saga*, containing an evocation from the dead, may be found in the 6th volume of *Miscellany Poems*, published by Mr. Dryden.

and translated by Olaus word for word, from the original. This Lodbrog was a king of Denmark, who lived in the eighth century, famous for his wars and victories; and at the same time an eminent *Scalder* or poet. It was his misfortune to fall at last into the hands of one his enemies, by whom he was thrown into prison, and condemned to be destroyed by serpents. In this situation he solaced himself with rehearsing all the exploits of his life. The poem is divided into twenty-nine stanzas, of ten lines each; and every stanza begins with these words, *Pugnativimus Ensis*, "We have fought with our swords." Olaus's version is in many places so obscure as to be hardly intelligible. I have subjoined the whole below exactly as he has published it; and shall translate as much as may give the English reader an idea of the spirit and strain of this kind of poetry*.

"We

- * 1. *Pugnativimus Ensis*
 Haud post longum tempus
 Cum in Gotlandia accessimus
 Ad serpentis immensi necem
 Tunc impetravimus Thoram
 Ex hoc vocarunt me virum
 Quod serpentem transfodi
 Hirsutam braccam ob illam cedem
 Cuspide ictum intuli in colubrum
 Ferro lucidorum stupendiorum.
2. Multum juvenis fui quando acquisivimus
 Orientem versus in Oreonico freto
 Vulnerum amnes avidæ feræ
 Et flavipedi avi
 Accepimus ibidem sonuerunt
 Ad sublimes galeas
 Dura fera magnam escam
 Omnis erat oceanus vulnus
 Vadavit corvus in sanguine Cæforum.
3. Alte tulimus tunc lanceas
 Quando viginti annos numeravimus
 Et celebrem laudem comparavimus passim

Vicimus

" We have fought with our swords. I was young
 " when, towards the east, in the bay of Oreon, we
 " made torrents of blood flow, to gorge the raven-
 " ous beasts of prey, and the yellow-footed bird
 " There resounded the hard steel upon the lofty hel-
 " mets of men. The whole ocean was one wound
 " Th

Vicinus octo barones
 In oriente ante Dimini portum
 Aquilæ impetravimus tunc sufficientem
 Hospitii sumptum in illa strage
 Sudor decedit in vulnorum
 Oceano perditit exercitus ætatem.

4. Pugnæ facta copia
 Cum Helsingianos postulavimus
 Ad aulam Odini
 Naves direximus in Ostium Vistulæ
 Mucro potuit tum mordere
 Omnis erat vulnus unda
 Terra rubefacta Calido
 Frendebat gladius in loricas
 Gladius findebat Clypeos.

5. Memina neminem tunc fugisse
 Priusquam in navibus
 Heraudus in bello caderet
 Non findit navibus
 Alius baro præstantior
 Mare ad portum
 In navibus longis post illum
 Sic attulit princeps passim
 Alacre in bellum cor.

6. Exercitus abjecit Clypeos
 Cum hasta volavit
 Ardua ad virorum pectora
 Momordit Scarforum cautes
 Gladius in pugna
 Sanguineus erat Clypeus
 Antequam Rafno rex caderet
 Fluxit ex virorum capitibus
 Calidus in loricas sudor.

“ The crow waded in the blood of the slain. When
 “ we had numbered twenty years, we lifted our
 “ spears on high, and every where spread our re-
 “ newn.

7. Habere potuerunt tum corvi
 Ante Indirorum insulas
 Sufficientem prædam dilanianclam
 Acquisivimus feris carnivoris
 Plenum prandium unico actu
 Difficile erat unius facere mentionem
 Oriente sole
 Spicula vidi pungere
 Propulerunt arcus ex se ferra.
8. Altum mugierunt enses
 Antequam in Laneo campo
 Eislínus rex cecidit
 Processimus auro ditati
 Ad terram prostratorum dimicandum
 Gladius secuit Clypeorum
 Picturas in galearum conventu
 Cervicum multum ex vulneribus
 Diffusum per cerebrum fissum.
9. Tenuimus Clypeos in sanguine
 Cum hastam unximus
 Ante Boring holmum
 Telorum nubes disrumpunt clypeum
 Extrusit arcus ex se metallum
 Volnir cecedit in conflictu
 No erat illo rex major
 Cæsi dispersi late per littora
 Feræ amplectebantur escam.
10. Pugna manifesta crescebat
 Antequam Freyr rex caderet
 In Flandrorum terra
 Cæpit cæruleus ad incidendum
 Sanguine illitus in auream
 Loricam in pugna
 Durus armorum mucro olim
 Virgo deploravit matutinam lanienam
 Multa præda dabatur feris.

“ nown. Eight barons we overcame in the east, be
 “ fore the port of Diminum ; and plentifully we feast
 “ ed the Eagle in that slaughter. The warm stream
 “ o

11. Centies centenos vidi jacere
 In navibus
 Ubi Ænglones vocatur
 Navigavimus ad pugnam
 Per sex dies antequam exercitus caderet
 Transegimus mucronum missam
 In exortu solis
 Coactus est pro nostris gladiis
 Valdiosur in bello occumbere.
12. Ruit pluvia sanguinis de gladiis
 Præcep̃s in Bardafyrde
 Pallidum corpus pro accipitribus
 Murmuravit arcus ubi mucro
 Acriter mordebat Loricās
 In conflictu
 Odini Pileus Galea
 Cucurrit arcus ad vulnus
 Venenate acutus conspersus sudore sanguineo.
13. Tenuimus magica scuta
 Alte in pugnae ludo
 Ante Hiadningum sinum
 Videre licuit tum viros
 Qui gladiis lacerarunt Clypeos
 In gladiatorio murmure
 Galeæ attritæ virorum
 Erat sicut splendidam virginem
 In lecto juxta se collocare.
14. Dura venit tempestas Clypeis
 Cadavir cecedit in terram
 In Nortumbria
 Erat circa matutinum tempus
 Hominibus necessum erat fugere
 Ex prælio ubi acute
 Cassidis campos mordebant gladii
 Erat hoc veluti Juvenem viduam
 In primaria sede osculari.

“ of wounds ran into the ocean. The army fell before
 “ us. When we steered our ships into the mouth of the
 “ Vistula, we sent the Helsingians to the hall of Odion.
 VOL. II. R “ Then

15. Herthiofe evasit fortunatus
 In Australibus Orcadibus ipse
 Victoriæ in nostris hominibus
 Cogebatur in armorum nimbo
 Rogvaldus occumbere
 Iste venit summus super accipitres
 Luctus in gladiatorum ludo
 Strenue jactabat concussor
 Galeæ sanguinis teli.
16. Quilibet jacebat transversim supra alium
 Gaudebat pugna lætus
 Accipiter ob gladiatorum ludum
 Non fecit aquilam aut aprum
 Qui Irlandiam gubernavit
 Conventus fiebat ferri & Clypei
 Marstanus rex jejunis
 Fiebat in vedræ sinu
 Præda data corvis.
17. Bellatorem multum vidi cadere
 Mane ante machæram
 Virum in mucronum dissidio
 Filio meo incidit mature
 Gladius juxta cor
 Egillus fecit Agnerum spoliatum
 Impertertitum virum vita
 Sonuit lancea prope Hamdi
 Griseam lorica splendebant vexilla.
18. Verborum tenaces vidi dissecare
 Haut minutim pro lupis
 Endili maris ensibus
 Erat per Hebdomadæ spacium
 Quasi mulieres vinum apportarent
 Rubefactæ erant naves
 Valde in strepitu armorum

“ Then did the sword bite. The waters were all
 “ one wound. The earth was dyed red with the
 “ warm stream. The sword rung upon the coats of
 “ mail,

Sciffa erat lorica

In Scioldungorum prælio.

19. Pulchricomum vidi crepusculascere
 Virginis amatorem circa matutinum
 Et confabulationis amicum viduarum
 Erat sicut calidum balneum
 Vinei vasis nympba portaret
 Nos in Ilæ freto
 Antiquam Orn rex caderet
 Sanguineum Clypeum vidi ruptum
 Hoc invertit virorum vitam.
20. Egimus gladiorum ad cædem
 Ludum in Lindis insula
 Cum regibus tribus
 Pauci potuerunt inde lætari
 Cecedit mulcus in rictum ferarum
 Accipiter dilaniavit carnem cum lupo
 Ut fatur inde discederet
 Hybernorum sanguis in oceanum
 Copiose decedit per mactationis tempus.
21. Alte gladius mordebat Clypeos
 Tunc cum aurei coloris
 Hasta fricabat loricas
 Videre licuit in Onlugs insula
 Per secula multum post
 Ibi fuit ad gladiorum ludos
 Reges processerunt
 Rubicundum erat circa insulam
 Ar volans Draco vulnerum.
22. Quid est viro forti morte certius
 Etsi ipse in armorum nimbo
 Adversus collocatus sit
 Sæpe deplorat ætatem
 Qui nunquam premitur
 Malum ferunt timidum incitare.

Aquilam

“ mail, and clove the bucklers in twain. None fled
“ on that day, till among his ships Heraudus fell.
“ Than him no braver baron cleaves the sea with
R 2 ships ;

Aquilam ad gladiatorum ludum
Meticulosus venit nuspian
Cordi suo usui

23. Hoc numero æquum ut procedat
In contactu gladiatorum
Juvenis unus contra alterum
Non retrocedat vir a viro.
Hoc fuit viri fortis nobilitas diu
Semper debet amoris amicus virginum
Audax esse in fremitu armorum.
24. Hoc videtur mihi re vera
Quod fata sequimur
Rarus transgreditur fata Parcarum
Non destinavi Ellæ
De vitæ exitu meæ
Cum ego sanguinem semimortuus tegerem
Et naves in aquas protrusi
Passim impetravimus tum feris
Escam in Scotiæ sinibus.
25. Hoc videre facit semper
Quod balderi patris scamna
Parata scio in aula
Bibemus cerevisiam brevi
Ex concavis crateribus craniorum
Non gemit vir fortis contra mortem
Magnifici in Odini domibus
Non venio desperabundis
Verbis ad odini aulam.
26. Hic vellent nunc omnes
Filii Aslaugæ gladiis
Amarum bellum excitare
Si exacte scirent
Calamitates nostras
Quem non pauci angues

Venenati

“ ships; a chearful heart did he ever bring to the
 “ combat: Then the host threw away their shields,
 “ when the uplifted spear flew at the breasts of he-
 “ roes. The sword bit the Scarfian rocks; bloody
 “ was the shield in battle, until Rafno the king was
 “ slain. From the heads of warriors the warm sweat
 “ streamed down their armour. The crows around
 “ the Indirian islands had an ample prey. It were
 “ difficult to single out one among so many deaths.
 “ At the rising of the sun I beheld the spears piercing
 “ the

Venenati me discerpunt
 Matrem accepi meis
 Filiis ita ut corda valeant.

27. Valde inclinatur ad hæreditatem
 Crudele stat nocumentum a vipera
 Anguis inhabitat aulum cordis
 Speramus alterius ad Othini
 Virgam in Ellæ sanguine
 Filiis meis livescet
 Sua ira rubescet
 Non acres juvenes
 Sessionem tranquillam facient.

28. Habeo quinquagies
 Prælia sub signis facta
 Ex belli invitatione & semel
 Minime putavi hominum
 Quod me futurus esset
 Juvenis didici mucronem rubefacere
 Alius rex præstantior
 Nos Asæ invitabunt
 Non est lugenda mors.

29. Fert animus finire
 Invitant me Dysæ
 Quas ex Othini Aula
 Othinus mihi misit
 Lætus cerevisiam cum Asis
 In summa sede bibam
 Vitæ elapsæ sunt horæ
 Ridens moriar.

“ the bodies of foes, and the bows throwing forth
 “ their steel pointed arrows. Loud roared the swords
 “ in the plains of Lano. The virgin long bewailed
 “ the slaughter of that morning.” In this strain the
 poet continues to describe several other military ex-
 ploits. The images are not much varied ; the noise
 of arms, the streaming of blood, and the feasting the
 birds of prey, often recurring. He mentions the
 death of two of his sons in battle ; and the lamenta-
 tion he describes as made for one of them is very
 singular. A Grecian or Roman poet would have
 introduced the virgins or nymphs of the wood, be-
 wailing the untimely fall of a young hero. But, says
 our Gothic poet, “ when Rogvaldus was slain, for him
 “ mourned all the hawks of heaven,” as lamenting
 a benefactor who had so liberally supplied them with
 prey ; “ for boldly,” as he adds, “ in the strife of
 “ swords, did the breaker of helmets throw the spear
 “ of blood.”

The poem concludes with sentiments of the high-
 est bravery and contempt of death. “ What is more
 “ certain to the brave man than death, though amidst
 “ the storm of swords, he stands always ready to op-
 “ pose it ? He only regrets this life who hath never
 “ known distress. The timorous man allures the
 “ devouring eagle to the field of battle. The coward,
 “ wherever he comes, is useless to himself. This I
 “ esteem honourable, that the youth should advance
 “ to the combat fairly matched one against another ;
 “ nor man retreat from man. Long was this the
 “ warrior’s highest glory. He who aspires to the
 “ love of virgins, ought always to be foremost in
 “ the roar of arms. It appears to me of truth, that
 “ we are led by the Fates. Seldom can any over-
 “ come the appointment of destiny. Little did I
 “ foresee that Ella* was to have my life in his hands,

R 3

in.

* This was the name of his enemy who had condemned him to death.

“ In that day, when fainting I concealed my blood,
 “ and pushed forth my ships into the waves ; after
 “ we had spread a repast for the beasts of prey
 “ throughout the Scottish bays. But this makes me
 “ always rejoice that in the halls of our father Balder
 “ [or Odin] I know there are seats prepared, where,
 “ in a short time, we shall be drinking ale out of the
 “ hollow skulls of our enemies. In the house of the
 “ mighty Odin, no brave man laments death. I
 “ come not with the voice of despair to Odin’s hall.
 “ How eagerly would all the sons of Auflauga now
 “ rush to war did they know the distress of their fa-
 “ ther, whom a multitude of venomous serpents tear ?
 “ I have given to my children a mother who hath
 “ filled their hearts with valour. I am fast approach-
 “ ing to my end. A cruel death awaits me from the
 “ viper’s bite. A snake dwells in the midst of my
 “ heart. I hope that the sword of some of my sons
 “ shall yet be stained with the blood of Ella. The
 “ valiant youths will wax red with anger, and will
 “ not sit in peace. Fifty and one times have I rear-
 “ ed the standard in battle. In my youth I learned
 “ to dye the sword in blood: my hope was then, that
 “ no king among men would be more renowned than
 “ me. The goddesses of death will now soon call
 “ me ; I must not mourn my death. Now I end
 “ my song. The goddesses invite me away ; they
 “ whom Odin has sent to me from his hall. I will
 “ sit upon a lofty seat, and drink ale joyfully with
 “ the goddesses of death. The hours of my life are
 “ run out. I will smile when I die.”

This is such poetry as we might expect from a
 barbarous nation. It breathes a most ferocious spi-
 rit. It is wild, harsh, and irregular ; but, at the
 same time, animated and strong ; the style, in the
 original, full of inversionis, and, as we learn from
 some of Olaus’s notes, highly metaphorical and
 figured.

But

But when when we open the works of Ossian, a very different scene presents itself. There we find the fire and the enthusiasm of the most early times, combined with an amazing degree of regularity and art. We find tenderness, and even delicacy of sentiment, greatly predominant over fierceness and barbarity. Our hearts are melted with the softest feelings, and, at the same time, elevated with the highest ideas of magnanimity, generosity, and true heroism. When we turn from the poetry of Lodbrog to that of Ossian, it is like passing from a savage desert, into a fertile and cultivated country. How is this to be accounted for? Or by what means to be reconciled with the remote antiquity attributed to these poems? This is a curious point and requires to be illustrated.

That the ancient Scots were of Celtic original, is past all doubt. Their conformity with the Celtic nations in language, manners, and religion, proves it to a full demonstration. The Celtæ, a great and mighty people, altogether distinct from the Goths and Teutones, once extended their dominion over all the west of Europe; but seem to have had their most full and complete establishment in Gaul. Wherever the Celtæ or Gauls are mentioned by ancient writers, we seldom fail to hear of their Druids and their Bards; the institution of which two orders, was the capital distinction of their manners and policy. The Druids were there philosophers and priests; the Bards, their poets and recorders of heroic actions: And both these orders of men, seem to have subsisted among them, as chief members of the state, from time immemorial*. We must not therefore

* There are three tribes who are respected in different degrees, viz. the Bards, the Priests, and the Druids. The Bards are the poets, and those who record the actions of their heroes. *Strabo*, B. IV.

fore imagine the Celtæ to have been altogether a gross and rude nation. They possessed from very remote ages a formed system of discipline and manners, which appears to have had a deep and lasting influence. Ammianus Marcellinus gives them this express testimony, that there flourished among them the study of the most laudable arts; introduced by the Bards, whose office it was to sing in heroic verse, the gallant actions of illustrious men; and by the Druids who lived together in colleges or societies, after the Pythagorian manner, and philosophising upon the highest subjects, asserted the immortality of the human soul†. Though Julius Cæsar, in his account of Gaul, does not expressly mention the Bards, yet it is plain that under the title of Druids, he comprehends that whole college or order; of which the Bards, who, it is probable, were the disciples of the Druids, undoubtedly made a part. It deserves remark, that according to his account, the Druidical institution first took rise in Britain, and passed from.

There are likewise among them the composers of poems, whom they call Bards; and these, with instruments like the lyre, celebrate the praises of some, and rail against others. *Diad. Sicul. B. V.*

And those who are called Bards, are their oracles, and these bards are poets who sing praises in odes. *Pofidonius ap. Athenæum, B. VI.*

† Per hæc loco (speaking of Gaul) hominibus paulatim excultis, *viguere studia laudabilium doctrinarum*; inchoata per Bardos & Euhages & Druidas. Et Bardi quidem fortia virorum illustrium facta heroicis composita versibus cum dulcibus lyræ modulis cantitarunt. Euhages vero scrutantes seriem & sublimia naturæ pandere conabantur. Inter hos Druidæ ingeniis celsiores, ut auctoritas Pythagoræ decrevit sodalitiis adstricti consortiis, quæstionibus altarum occultarumque rerum erecti sunt; & despectantes humana pronuntiarunt animas immortales. - *Amm. Marcellinus, l. 15. cap. 9.*

from thence into Gaul; so that they who aspired to be thorough masters of that learning were wont to resort to Britain. He adds too, that such as were to be initiated among the Druids, were obliged to commit to their memory a great number of verses, insomuch that some employed twenty years in this course of education; and that they did not think it lawful to record these poems in writing, but sacredly handed them down by tradition from race to race*.

So strong was the attachment of the Celtic nations to their poetry and their bards, that amidst all the changes of their government and manners, even long after the order of Druids was extinct, and the national religion altered, the Bards continued to flourish; not as a set of strolling songsters, like the Greek *Aoidoi* or Rhapsodists, in Homer's time, but as an order of men highly respected in the state, and supported by a public establishment. We find them, according to the testimonies of Strabo and Diodorus, before the age of Augustus Cæsar; and we find them remaining under the same name, and exercising the same functions as of old, in Ireland, and in the north of Scotland, almost down to our own times. It is well known, that in both these countries, every *Regulus* or chief had his own bard, who was considered as an officer of rank in his court; and had lands assigned him, which descended to his family. Of the honour in which the bards were held, many instances occur in Ossian's poems. On all important occasions, they were the ambassadors between contending chiefs; and their persons were held sacred. "Cainbar feared to stretch his sword to the bards, though his soul was dark. "Loose the bards, said his brother Cathmor, they are the sons of other times. Their voice shall be
"heard

* Vid. Cæsar de bello Gall. lib. 6.

“heard in other ages, when the kings of Temora
“have failed.”

From all this, the Celtic tribes clearly appear to have been addicted in so high a degree to poetry, and to have made it so much their study from the earliest times as may remove our wonder at meeting with a vein of higher poetical refinement among them, than was at first sight to have been expected from among nations, whom we are accustomed to call barbarous. Barbarity, I must observe, is a very equivocal term; it admits of many different forms and degrees; and though, in all of them, it excludes polished manners, it is, however, not inconsistent with generous sentiments and tender affections*. What degrees of friendship,
love,

* Surely among the wild Laplanders, if any where, barbarity is in its most perfect state. Yet their love songs which Scheffer has given us in his *Laponia*, are a proof that natural tenderness of sentiment may be found in a country, into which the least glimmering of science has never penetrated. To most English readers these songs are well known by the elegant translations of them in the *Spectator*, No. 366 and 406. I shall subjoin Scheffer's Latin version of one them, which has the appearance of being strictly literal.

Sol, clarissimum emitte lumen paludem Orra. Si enifus in summa picearum cacumina scirem me visurum Orra paludem, in ea eniterer, ut viderem inter quos amica, mea esset flores; omnes fuscinderem frutices ibi enatos, omnes ramos præsecarem, hos virentes ramos. Cursum nubium essem secutus, quæ iter suum instituunt versus paludem Orra; si ad te volare possem alis, cornicum alis. Sed mihi defunt alæ, alæ querquedulæ pedesque, anserum pedes plantæve bonæ, quæ deferre me valeant ad te. Satis expectasti diu, per tot dies, tot dies tuos optimos, oculis tuis jucundissimis, corde tuo amicissimo. Quod si longissime velles effugere, cito tamen te consequerer. Quid firmitus validiusve esse potest quam contorti nervicatenæve ferreæ, quæ durissime ligant?

love, and heroism, may possibly be found to prevail in a rude state of society, no one can say. Astonishing instances of them we know, from history, have sometimes appeared: and a few characters distinguished by those high qualities, might lay a foundation for a set of manners being introduced into the songs of the bards, more refined, it is probable, and exalted, according to the usual poetical licence, than the real manners of the country. In particular, with respect to heroism; the great employment of the Celtic bards, was to delineate the characters, and sing the praises of heroes. So Lucan:

Vos quoque qui fortes animos, belloque peremptos,
Laudibus in longum vates diffunditis ævum
Plurima securi fudistis carmina Bardi.

Pharf. l. i.

Now when we consider a college or order of men, who, cultivating poetry throughout a long series of ages, had their imaginations continually employed on the ideas of heroism; who had all the poems and panegyrics, which were composed by their predecessors, handed down to them with care; who rivalled and endeavoured to outstrip those who had gone before them, each in the celebration of his particular hero; is it not natural to think, that at length the character of a hero would appear in their songs with the highest lustre, and be adorned with qualities truly noble? Some of the qualities indeed which distinguish a Fingal, moderation, humanity, and clemency, would not probably

ligant? Sic amor contorquet caput nostrum, mutat cogitationes & sententias. Peurorum voluntas, voluntas venti; juvenum cogitationes, longæ cogitationes. Quos si audirem omnes, a via, a via justa declinarem. Unum est consilium quod capiam; ita scio viam rectiorem me reperturum. Schefferi Lapponia, Cap. 25.

bably be the first ideas of heroism occurring to a barbarous people: But no sooner had such ideas begun to dawn on the minds of the poets, than, as the human mind easily opens to the native representations of human perfection, they would be seized and embraced; they would enter into their panegyrics; they would afford materials for succeeding bards to work upon, and improve; they would contribute not a little to exalt the public manners. For such songs as these, familiar to the Celtic warriors from their childhood, and throughout their whole life, both in war and in peace, their principal entertainment, must have had a very considerable influence in propagating among them real manners nearly approaching to the poetical; and in forming even such a hero as Fingal. Especially when we consider that among their limited objects of ambition, among the few advantages which in a savage state, man could obtain over man, the chief was Fame, and that immortality which they expected to receive from their virtues and exploits in the songs of bards*.

Having made these remarks on the Celtic poetry and bards in general, I shall next consider the particular advantages which Ossian possessed. He appears clearly to have lived in a period which enjoyed all the benefit I just now mentioned of traditionary poetry. The exploits of Trathal, Trenmor, and the other ancestors of Fingal, are spoken of as familiarly known. Ancient bards are frequently alluded to. In one remarkable passage, Ossian describes himself
as

* When Edward I. conquered Wales, he put to death all the Welch bards. This cruel policy plainly shews, how great an influence he imagined the songs of these bards to have over the minds of the people; and of what nature he judged that influence to be. The Welch bards were of the same Celtic race with the Scottish and Irish.

as living in a sort of classical age, enlightened by the memorials of former times, which were conveyed in the songs of bards; and points at a period of darkness and ignorance which lay beyond the reach of tradition. His words," says he, "came only by halves to our ears; they were dark as the tales of other times, before the light of the song arose." Ossian himself appears to have been endowed by nature with an exquisite sensibility of heart; prone to that tender melancholy which is so often an attendant on great genius; and susceptible equally of strong and of soft emotions. He was not only a professed bard, educated with care, as we may easily believe, to all the poetical art then known, and connected, as he shews us himself, in intimate friendship with the other contemporary bards, but a warrior also; and the son of the most renowned hero and prince of his age. This formed a conjunction of circumstances, uncommonly favourable towards exalting the imagination of a poet. He relates expeditions in which he had been engaged; he sings of battles in which he had fought and overcome; he had beheld the most illustrious scenes which that age could exhibit, both of heroism in war, and magnificence in peace. For however rude the magnificence of those times may seem to us, we must remember that all ideas of magnificence are comparative; and that the age of Fingal was an æra of distinguished splendor in that part of the world. Fingal reigned over a considerable territory; he was enriched with the spoils of the Roman province; he was ennobled by his victories and great actions; and was in all respects a personage of much higher dignity than any of the Chieftains, or heads of Clans, who lived in the same country, after a more extensive monarchy was established.

The manners of Ossian's age, so far as we can gather them from his writings, were abundantly fa-

vourable to a poetical genius. The two dispirited vices, to which Longinus imputes the decline of poetry, covetousness and effeminacy, were as yet unknown. The cares of men were few. They lived a roving indolent life; hunting and war their principal employments; and their chief amusements, the music of bards and "the feast of shells." The great object pursued by heroic spirits, was "to receive their fame, that is to become worthy of being celebrated in the songs of bards; and "to have their "name on the four gray stones." To die, unlamented by a bard, was deemed so great a misfortune, as even to disturb their ghosts in another state. "They wander in thick mists beside the reedy lake; but never shall they rise, without the song, to the dwelling of winds." After death, they expected to follow employments of the same nature with those which had amused them on earth; to fly with their friends on clouds, to pursue airy deer, and to listen to their praise in the mouths of bards. In such times as these, in a country where poetry had been so long cultivated, and so highly honoured, is it any wonder, that among the race and succession of bards, one Homer should arise; a man who, endowed with a natural happy genius, favoured by peculiar advantages of birth and condition, and meeting in the course of his life with a variety of incidents proper to fire his imagination, and to touch his heart, should attain a degree of eminence in poetry, worthy to draw the admiration of more refined ages?

The compositions of Ossian are so strongly marked with characters of antiquity, that although there were no external proof to support that antiquity, hardly any reader of judgment and taste, could hesitate in referring them to a very remote æra. There are four great stages through which men successively pass in the progress of society. The first and earliest is the life of hunters; pasturage succeeds to this, as the
ideas

ideas of property begin to take root; next agriculture; and lastly, commerce. Throughout Ossian's poems, we plainly find ourselves in the first of these periods of society; during which, hunting was the chief employment of men, and the principal method of their procuring subsistence. Pasturage was not indeed wholly unknown; for we hear of dividing the herd in the case of a divorce; but the allusions to herds and to cattle are not many; and of agriculture, we find no traces. No cities appear to have been built in the territories of Fingal. No arts are mentioned, except that of navigation and of working in iron*. Every thing presents to us the most simple and unimproved manners. At their feasts, the heroes prepared their own repast; they sat

S 2

round

* Their skill in navigation need not at all surprise us. Living in the western islands, along the coast, or in a country which is every where intersected with arms of the sea, one of the first objects of their attention, from the earliest time, must have been how to traverse the waters. Hence that knowledge of the stars, so necessary for guiding them by night, of which we find several traces in Ossian's works; particularly in the beautiful description of Cathmor's shield, in the seventh book of Temora. Among all the northern maritime nations, navigation was very early studied. Piratical incursions were the chief means they employed for acquiring booty; and were among the first exploits which distinguished them in the world. Even the savage Americans were at their first discovery found to possess the most surprising skill and dexterity in navigating their immense lakes and rivers.

The description of Cuchullon's chariot, in the first book of Fingal has been objected to by some, as representing greater magnificence than is consistent with the supposed poverty of that age. But this chariot is plainly only a horse-litter; and the gems mentioned in the description, are no other than the shining stones or pebbles, known to be frequently found along the western coast of Scotland.

round the light of the burning oak ; the wind lifted their locks, and whistled through their open halls. Whatever was beyond the necessities of life was known to them only as the spoil of the Roman province ; “ the gold of the stranger ; the lights of the “ stranger ; the steeds of the stranger ; the children “ of the rein.”

This representation of Ossian's times, must strike us the more, as genuine and authentic, when it is compared with a poem of later date, which Mr. Macpherson has preserved in one of his notes. It is that wherein five bards are represented as passing the evening in the house of a chief, and each of them separately giving his description of the night. The night scenery is beautiful ; and the author has plainly imitated the style and manner of Ossian : But he has allowed some images to appear which betray a later period of society. For we meet with windows clapping, the herds of goats and cows seeking shelter, the shepherd wandering, corn on the plain, and the wakeful hind rebuilding the shocks of corn which had been overturned by the tempest. Whereas, in Ossian's works, from beginning to end, all is consistent ; no modern allusion drops from him ; but every where, the same face of rude nature appears ; a country wholly uncultivated, thinly inhabited, and recently peopled. The grass of the rock, the flower of the heath, the thistle with its beard, are the chief ornaments of his landscapes. “ The desert,” says Fingal, “ is enough to me, with all its woods and deer.”

The circle of ideas and transactions, is no wider than suits such an age : Nor any greater diversity introduced into characters, than the events of that period would naturally display. Valour and bodily strength are the admired qualities. Contentions arise, as is usual among savage nations, from the slightest causes. To be affronted at a tournament, or to be omitted in the invitation to a feast, kindles a war.

Women

Women are often carried away by force; and the whole tribe, as in the Homeric times, rise to avenge the wrong. The heroes show refinement of sentiment, indeed, on several occasions, but none of manners. They speak of their past actions with freedom, boast of their exploits, and sing their own praise. In their battles, it is evident that drums, trumpets, or bagpipes, were not known or used. They had no expedient for giving the military alarms but striking a shield, or raising a loud cry: And hence the loud and terrible voice of Fingal is often mentioned, as a necessary qualification of a great general. Of military discipline or skill, they appear to have been entirely destitute. Their armies seem not to have been numerous; their battles were disorderly; and terminated, for the most part, by a personal combat, or wrestling of the two chiefs; after which, "the bard sung the song of peace, and the battle ceased along the field."

The manner of composition bears all the marks of the greatest antiquity. No artful transitions; nor full and extended connection of parts; such as we find among the poets of later times, when order and regularity of composition were more studied and known; but a style always rapid and vehement; in narration concise, even to abruptness, and leaving several circumstances to be supplied by the reader's imagination. The language has all that figurative cast, which, as I before shewed, partly a glowing and undisciplined imagination, partly the sterility of language, and the want of proper terms, have always introduced into the early speech of nations; and, in several respects, it carries a remarkable resemblance to the style of the Old Testament. It deserves particular notice, as one of the most genuine and decisive characters of antiquity, that very few general terms or abstracted ideas are to be met with in the whole collection of

Ossian's works. The ideas of men, at first, were all particular. They had not words to express general conceptions. These were the consequence of more profound reflection, and longer acquaintance with the arts of thought and of speech. Ossian, accordingly, almost never expresses himself in the abstract. His ideas extended little farther than to the objects he saw around him. A public, a community, the universe, were conceptions beyond his sphere. Even a mountain, a sea, or a lake, which he has occasion to mention, though only in a simile, are for the most part particularized; it is the hill of Cromla, the storm of the sea of Malmor, or the reeds of the lake of Lego. A mode of expression, which, whilst it is characteristical of ancient ages, is, at the same time, highly favourable to descriptive poetry. For the same reasons, personification is a poetical figure not very common with Ossian. Inanimate objects, such as winds, trees, flowers, he sometimes personifies with great beauty. But the personifications, which are so familiar to later poets, of Fame, Time, Terror, Virtue, and the rest of that class, were unknown to our Celtic bard. These were modes of conception too abstract for his age.

All these are marks so undoubted, and some of them too, so nice and delicate, of the most early times, as put the high antiquity of these poems out of question. Especially when we consider, that if there had been any imposture in this case, it must have been contrived and executed in the Highlands of Scotland, two or three centuries ago; as, up to this period, both by manuscripts, and by the testimony of a multitude of living witnesses, concerning the uncontravertible tradition of these poems, they can clearly be traced. Now, this is a period when that country enjoyed no advantages for a composition of this kind, which it may not be supposed to have enjoyed in as great, if not in a greater degree, a thousand

land years before. To suppose that two or three hundred years ago, when we well knew the Highlands to have been in a state of gross ignorance and barbarity, there should have arisen in that country a poet, of such exquisite genius, and of such deep knowledge of mankind, and of history, as to divest himself of the ideas and manners of his own age, and to give us a just and natural picture of a state of society, ancients by a thousand years; one who could support this counterfeited antiquity, through such a large collection of poems without the least inconsistency; and who, possessed of all this genius and art, had at the same time the self-denial of concealing himself, and of ascribing his own works to an antiquated bard, without the imposture being detected, is a supposition that transcends all bounds of credibility.

There are, besides, two other circumstances to be attended to, still of greater weight, if possible, against this hypothesis. One is, the total absence of religious ideas from this work; for which the translator has, in his preface, given a very probable account, on the footing of its being the work of Ossian. The druidical superstition was, in the days of Ossian, on the point of its final extinction; and for particular reasons, odious to the family of Fingal; whilst the Christian faith was not yet established. But had it been the work of one, to whom the ideas of Christianity were familiar from his infancy; and who had superadded to them also the bigotted superstition of a dark age and country; it is impossible but in some passage or other, the traces of them would have appeared. The other circumstance is, the entire silence which reigns with respect to all the great clans of families, which are now established in the Highlands. The origin of these several clans is known to be very ancient: And it is as well known, that there is no passion by which a native Highlander is more distinguished, than by attachment to his clan, and jealousy

lously for its honour. That a Highland bard, in forging a work relating to the antiquities of his country, should have inserted no circumstance which pointed out the rise of his own clan, which ascertained its antiquity, or increased its glory, is of all suppositions that can be formed, the most improbable; and the silence on this head amounts to a demonstration that the author lived before any of the present great clans were formed or known.

Assuming it then, as we well may, for certain, that the poems now under consideration, are genuine venerable monuments of very remote antiquity; I proceed to make some remarks upon their general spirit and strain. The two great characteristics of Ossian's poetry are, tenderness and sublimity. It breathes nothing of the gay and cheerful kind; an air of solemnity and seriousness is diffused over the whole. Ossian is perhaps the only poet who never relaxes, or lets himself down into the light and amusing strain; which I readily admit to be no small disadvantage to him with the bulk of readers. He moves perpetually in the high region of the grand and the pathetic. One key note is struck at the beginning, and supported to the end; nor is any ornament introduced but what is perfectly concordant with the general tone or melody. The events recorded, are all serious and grave; the scenery throughout, wild and romantic. The extended heath by the sea shore; the mountain shaded with mist; the torrent rushing through a solitary valley; the scattered oaks, and the tombs of warriors overgrown with moss; all produce a solemn attention in the mind, and prepare it for great and extraordinary events. We find not in Ossian, an imagination that sports itself, and dresses out gay trifles to please the fancy. His poetry, more perhaps than that of any other writer, deserves to be styled, *The Poetry of the Heart*. It is a heart penetrated with noble sentiments, and with sublime and tender pas-

sions;

sions; a heart that glows and kindles the fancy; a heart that is full, and pours itself forth. Ossian did not write, like modern poets, to please readers and critics. He sung from the love of poetry and song. His delight was to think of the heroes among whom he had flourished; to recal the affecting incidents of his life; to dwell upon his past wars, and loves, and friendships; till, as he expresses it himself, "There comes a voice to Ossian and awakes his soul. It is the voice of years that are gone; they roll before me with all their deeds;" and under this true poetic inspiration, giving vent to his genius, no wonder we should so often hear, and acknowledge in his strains, the powerful and ever-pleasing voice of nature.

—Arte, natura potentior omni.—

Est Deus in nobis, agitante calescimus illo.

It is necessary here to observe, that the beauties of Ossian's writings cannot be felt by those who have given them only a single or a hasty perusal. His manner is so different from that of the poets, to whom we are most accustomed; his style is so concise, and so much crowded with imagery; the mind is kept at such a stretch in accompanying the author; that an ordinary reader is at first apt to be dazzled and fatigued, rather than pleased. His poems require to be taken up at intervals, and to be frequently reviewed; and then it is impossible but his beauties must open to every reader who is capable of sensibility. Those who have the highest degree of it, will relish them the most.

As Homer is of all the great poets, the one whose manner, and whose times come the nearest to Ossian's, we are naturally led to run a parallel in some instances between the Greek and the Celtic bard. For though Homer lived more than a thousand years before Ossian, it is not from the age of the world,
but

but from the state of society, that we are to judge of resembling times. The Greek has, in several points, a manifest superiority. He introduces a greater variety of incidents; he possesses a larger compass of ideas; has more diversity in his characters; and a much deeper knowledge of human nature. It was not to be expected, that in any of these particulars, Ossian could equal Homer. For Homer lived in a country where society was much farther advanced; he had beheld many more objects; cities built and flourishing; laws instituted; order, discipline, and arts begun. His field of observation was much larger and more splendid; his knowledge, of course, more extensive; his mind also, it shall be granted, more penetrating. But if Ossian's ideas and objects be less diversified than those of Homer, they are all, however, of the kind fittest for poetry: The bravery and generosity of heroes, the tenderness of lovers, the attachments of friends, parents and children. In a rude age and country, though the events that happen be few, the undissipated mind broods over them more; they strike the imagination, and fire the passions in a higher degree; and of consequence become happier materials to a poetical genius, than the same events when scattered through the wide circle of more varied action, and cultivated life.

Homer is a more cheerful and sprightly poet than Ossian. You discern in him all the Greek vivacity; whereas Ossian uniformly maintains the gravity and solemnity of a Celtic hero. This too is in a great measure to be accounted for from the different situations in which they lived, partly personal, and partly national. Ossian had survived all his friends, and was disposed to melancholy by the incidents of his life. But besides this, cheerfulness is one of the many blessings which we owe to formed society. The solitary wild state is always a serious one. Bating the sudden and violent bursts of mirth,

mirth, which sometimes break forth at their dances and feasts; the savage American tribes have been noted by all travellers for their gravity and taciturnity. Somewhat of this taciturnity may be also remarked in Ossian. On all occasions he is frugal of his words; and never gives you more of an image or a description, than is just sufficient to place it before you in one clear point of view. It is a blaze of lightning, which flashes and vanishes. Homer is more extended in his descriptions; and fills them up with a greater variety of circumstances. Both the poets are dramatic; that is, they introduce their personages frequently speaking before us. But Ossian is concise and rapid in his speeches, as he is in every other thing. Homer, with the Greek vivacity, had also some portion of the Greek loquacity. His speeches indeed are highly characteristical; and to them we are much indebted for that admirable display he has given human of nature. Yet if he be tedious any where, it is in these; some of them trifling, and some of them plainly unseasonable. Both poets are eminently sublime; but a difference may be remarked in the species of their sublimity. Homer's sublimity is accompanied with more impetuosity and fire; Ossian's with more of a solemn and awful grandeur. Homer hurries you along; Ossian elevates, and fixes you in astonishment. Homer is most sublime in actions and battles; Ossian, in description and sentiment. In the pathetic, Homer, when he chuses to exert it, has great power; but Ossian exerts that power much oftener, and has the character of tenderness far more deeply imprinted on his works. No poet knew better how to seize and melt the heart. With regard to dignity of sentiment, the pre-eminence must clearly be given to Ossian. This is indeed a surprising circumstance, that in point of humanity, magnanimity, virtuous feelings of every kind, our rude Celtic bard should be distinguished to such a degree,

degree, that not only the heroes of Homer, but even those of the polite and refined Virgil, are left far behind by those of Ossian.

After these general observations on the genius and spirit of our author, I now proceed to a nearer view, and more accurate examination of his works: and as *Fingal* is the first great poem in this collection, it is proper to begin with it. To refuse the title of an epic poem to *Fingal*, because it is not in every little particular exactly conformable to the practice of Homer and Virgil, were the mere squeamishness and pedantry of criticism. Examined even according to Aristotle's rules, it will be found to have all the essential requisites of a true and regular epic; and to have several of them in so high a degree, as at first view to raise our astonishment on finding Ossian's composition so agreeable to rules of which he was entirely ignorant. But our astonishment will cease, when we consider from what source Aristotle drew those rules. Homer knew no more of the laws of criticism than Ossian. But, guided by nature, he composed in verse a regular story, founded on heroic actions, which all posterity admired. Aristotle, with great sagacity and penetration, traced the causes of this general admiration. He observed what it was in Homer's composition, and in the conduct of his story, which gave it such power to please; from this observation, he deduced the rules which poets ought to follow, who would write and please like Homer; and to a composition formed according to such rules, he gave the name of an epic poem. Hence his whole system arose. Aristotle studied nature in Homer. Homer and Ossian both wrote from nature. No wonder that among all the three, there should be such agreement and conformity.

The fundamental rules delivered by Aristotle concerning an epic poem, are these: That the action
which

which is the ground work of the poem, should be one, complete, and great; that it should be feigned, not merely historical; that it should be enlivened with characters and manners; and heightened by the marvellous.

But before entering on any of these, it may perhaps be asked, what is the moral of Fingal? For, according to M. Bossu, an epic poem is no other than an allegory contrived to illustrate some moral truth. The poet, says this critic, must begin with fixing on some maxim, or instruction, which he intends to inculcate on mankind. He next forms a fable, like one of *Æsop's*, wholly with a view to the moral; and having thus settled and arranged his plan, he then looks into traditionary history for names and incidents, to give his fable some air of probability. Never did a more frigid, pedantic notion, enter into the mind of a critic. We may safely pronounce, that he who should compose an epic poem after this manner, who should first lay down a moral and contrive a plan, before he had thought of his personages and actors, might deliver indeed very sound instruction, but would find few readers. There cannot be the least doubt, that the first object which strikes an epic poet, which fires his genius, and gives him any idea of his work, is the action or subject he is to celebrate. Hardly is there any tale, any subject a poet can chuse for such a work, but will afford some general moral instruction. An epic poem is by its nature one of the most moral of all poetical compositions: But its moral tendency is by no means to be limited to some common-place maxim, which may be gathered from the story. It arises from the admiration of heroic actions, which such a composition is peculiarly calculated to produce; from the virtuous emotions which the characters and incidents raise, whilst we read it; from the happy impression which all the parts separately, as well as the

whole taken together, leave upon the mind. However, if a general moral be still insisted on, Fingal obviously furnishes one, not inferior to that of any other poet, *viz.* That Wisdom and Bravery always triumph over brutal force; or another nobler still: That the most complete victory over an enemy is obtained by that moderation and generosity which convert him into a friend.

The unity of the epic action, which of all Aristotle's rules, is the chief and most material, is so strictly preserved in Fingal, that it must be perceived by every reader. It is a more complete unity than what arises from relating the actions of one man, which the Greek critic justly censures as imperfect; it is the unity of one enterprise, the deliverance of Ireland from the invasion of Swaran: An enterprise, which has surely the full heroic dignity. All the incidents recorded, bear a constant reference to one end; no double plot is carried on; but the parts unite into a regular whole: And as the action is one and great, so it is an entire or complete action. For we find as the critic farther requires, a beginning, a middle, and an end; a nodus, or intrigue in the poem; difficulties occurring through Cuchullin's rashness and bad success; those difficulties gradually surmounted; and at last the work conducted to that happy conclusion which is held essential to epic poetry. Unity is indeed observed with greater exactness in Fingal, than in almost any other epic composition. For not only is unity of subject maintained, but that of time and place also. The Autumn is clearly pointed out as the season of the action: and from beginning to end the scene is never shifted from the heath of Lena, along the sea-shore. The duration of the action in Fingal, is much shorter than in the Iliad or Æneid. But sure, there may be shorter as well as longer heroic poems; and if the authority of Aristotle be also required for this, he says expressly that the epic composition is indefinite

indefinite as to the time of its duration. Accordingly the action of the *Iliad* lasts only forty seven days, whilst that of the *Æneid* is continued for more than a year.

Throughout the whole of *Fingal*, there reigns that grandeur of sentiment, style, and imagery, which ought ever to distinguish this high species of poetry. The story is conducted with no small art. The poet goes not back to a tedious recital of the beginning of the war with *Swaran*; but hastening to the main action, he falls in exactly, by a most happy coincidence of thought, with the rule of *Horace*.

Semper ad eventum festinat, & in mediâs res,
Non fecus ac notas, auditorem rapit—
Nec gemino bellum Trojanum orditur ab ovo.

De Arte Poet.

He invokes no muse, for he acknowledged none; but his occasional addresses to *Malvina*, have a finer effect than the invocation of any muse. He sets out with no formal proposition of his subject; but the subject naturally and easily unfolds itself; the poem opening in an animated manner, with the situation of *Cuchullin*, and the arrival of a Scout, who informs him of *Swaran's* landing. Mention is presently made of *Fingal*, and of the expected assistance from the ships of the lonely isle, in order to give further light to the subject. For the poet often shews his address in gradually preparing us for the events he is to introduce; and in particular the preparation for the appearance of *Fingal*, the previous expectations, that are raised, and the extreme magnificence fully answering these expectations, with which the hero is at length presented to us, are all worked up with such skillful conduct as would do honour to any poet of the most

refined times. Homer's art in magnifying the character of Achilles has been universally admired. Ossian certainly shows no less art in aggrandizing Fingal. Nothing could be more happily imagined for this purpose than the whole management of the last battle, wherein Gaul the son of Morni, had besought Fingal to retire, and to leave him and his other chiefs the honour of the day. The generosity of the king in agreeing to this proposal; the majesty with which he retreats to the hill, from whence he was to behold the engagement, attended by his bards, and waving the lightning of his sword; his perceiving the chiefs overpowered by numbers, but from unwillingness to deprive them of the glory of victory by coming in person to their assistance, first sending Ullin, the bard, to animate their courage; and at last, when the danger becomes more pressing, his rising in his might, and interposing like a divinity, to decide the doubtful fate of the day; are all circumstances contrived with so much art as plainly discover the Celtic bards to have been not unpractised in heroic poetry.

The story which is the foundation of the *Iliad* is in itself as simple as that of Fingal. A quarrel arises between Achilles and Agamemnon concerning a female slave; on which, Achilles, apprehending himself to be injured, withdraws his assistance from the rest of the Greeks. The Greeks fall into great distress, and beseech him to be reconciled to them. He refuses to fight for them in person, but sends his friend Patroclus; and upon his being slain, goes forth to revenge his death, and kills Hector. The subject of Fingal is this: Swaran comes to invade Ireland: Cuchullin, the guardian of the young king, had applied for assistance to Fingal, who had reigned in the opposite coast of Scotland. But before Fingal's arrival, he is hurried by rash counsel

to encounter Swaran. He is defeated; he retreats; and desponds. Fingal arrives in this conjuncture. The battle is for some time dubious; but in the end he conquers Swaran: and the remembrance of Swaran's being the brother of Agandecca, who had once saved his life, makes him dismiss him honourably. Homer, it is true, has filled up his story with a much greater variety of particulars than Ossian; and in this has shown a compass of invention superior to that of the other poet. But it must not be forgotten, that though Homer be more circumstantial, his incidents, however, are less diversified in kind than those of Ossian. War and bloodshed reign throughout the *Iliad*; and notwithstanding all the fertility of Homer's invention, there is so much uniformity in his subjects, that there are few readers, who before the close, are not tired of perpetual fighting. Whereas in Ossian, the mind is relieved by a more agreeable diversity. There is a finer mixture of war and heroism, with love and friendship, of martial, with tender scenes, than is to be met with, perhaps, in any other poet. The episodes, too, have great propriety: as natural, and proper to that age and country: consisting of the songs of bards, which are known to have been the great entertainment of the Celtic heroes in war, as well as in peace. These songs are not introduced at random; if you except the episode of Duchomor and Morna, in the first book, which though beautiful, is more unartful, than any of the rest; they have always some particular relation to the actor who is interested, or to the events which are going on; and, whilst they vary the scene, they preserve a sufficient connection with the main subject, by the fitness and propriety of their introduction.

As Fingal's love to Agandecca, influences some circumstances of the poem, particularly the honourable dismissal of Swaran at the end; it was neces-

sary that we should be let into this part of the hero's story. But as it lay without the compass of the present action, it could be regularly introduced no where, except in an episode. Accordingly the poet, with as much propriety, as if Aristotle himself had directed the plan, has contrived an episode for this purpose, in the song of Carril, at the beginning of the third book.

The conclusion of the poem is strictly according to rule; and is every way noble and pleasing. The reconciliation of the contending heroes, the consolation of Cuchullin, and the general felicity that crowns the action, sooth the mind in a very agreeable manner, and form that passage from agitation and trouble, to perfect quiet and repose, which critics require as the proper termination of the epic work. " Thus they passed the night in song, and brought
" back the morning with joy. Fingal arose on the
" heath; and took his glittering spear in his hand.
" He moved first towards the plains of Lena; and
" we followed like a ridge of fire. Spread the sail,
" said the king of Morven, and catch the winds that
" pour from Lena. We rose on the wave with
" songs; and rushed with joy through the foam of
" the ocean." So much for the unity and general conduct of the epic action in Fingal.

With regard to that property of the subject which Aristotle requires that it should be feigned not historical, he must not be understood so strictly, as if he meant to exclude all subjects which have any foundation in truth. For such exclusion would both be unreasonable in itself; and what is more, would be contrary to the practice of Homer, who is known to have founded his Iliad on historical facts concerning the war of Troy, which was famous throughout all Greece. Aristotle means no more than that it is the business of a poet not to be a mere annalist of facts, but to embellish truth with beautiful, probable, and
useful

useful fictions; to copy nature, as he himself explains it, like painters, who preserve a likeness, but exhibit their objects more grand and beautiful than they are in reality. That Ossian has followed this course, and building upon true history, has sufficiently adorned it with poetical fiction for aggrandizing his characters and facts, will not, I believe, be questioned by most readers. At the same time, the foundation which those facts and characters had in truth, and the share which the poet himself had in the transactions which he records, must be considered as no small advantage to his work. For truth makes an impression on the mind far beyond any fiction; and no man, let his imagination be ever so strong, relates any events so feelingly as those in which he has been interested; paints any scene so naturally as one which he has seen; or draws any characters in such strong colours as those which he has personally known. It is considered as an advantage of the epic subject to be taken from a period so distant, as by being involved in the darkness of tradition, may give licence to fable. Though Ossian's subject may at first view appear unfavourable in this respect, as being taken from his own times, yet when we reflect that he lived to an extreme old age; that he relates what had been transacted in another country, at the distance of many years, and after all that race of men who had been the actors were gone off the stage; we shall find the objection in a great measure obviated. In so rude an age, when no written records were known, when tradition was loose, and accuracy of any kind little attended to, what was great and heroic in one generation, easily ripened into the marvellous in the next.

The natural representation of human characters in an epic poem is highly essential to its merit: And in respect of this there can be no doubt of Homer's excelling all the heroic poets who have ever wrote.

But

But though Ossian be much inferior to Homer in this article, he will be found to be equal at least, if not superior to Virgil; and has indeed given all the display of human nature which the simple occurrences of his times could be expected to furnish. No dead uniformity of character prevails in Fingal; but on the contrary, the principal characters are not only clearly distinguished, but sometimes artfully contrasted so as to illustrate each other. Ossian's heroes, are, like Homer's, all brave; but their bravery, like those of Homer's, too, is of different kinds. For instance; the prudent, the sedate, the modest and circumspect Connal, is finely opposed to the presumptuous, rash, overbearing, but gallant and generous Calmar. Calmar hurries Cuchullin into action by his temerity; and when he sees the bad effect of his counsels, he will not survive the disgrace. Connal, like another Ulysses, attends Cuchullin to his retreat, counsels, and comforts him under his misfortune. The fierce, the proud, and high-spirited Swaran is admirably contrasted with the calm, the moderate, and generous Fingal. The character of Oscar is a favourite one throughout the whole poems. The amiable warmth of the young warrior; his eager impetuosity in the day of action; his passion for fame; his submission to his father; his tenderness for Malvina; are the strokes of a masterly pencil; the strokes are few; but it is the hand of nature, and attracts the heart. Ossian's own character, the old man, the hero, and the bard, all in one, presents to us, through the whole work, a most respectable and venerable figure, which we always contemplate with pleasure. Cuchullin is a hero of the highest class; daring, magnanimous, and exquisitely sensible to honour. We become attached to his interest, and are deeply touched with his distress; and after the admiration raised for him in the first part of the poem, it is a strong proof of Ossian's masterly genius that he durst adventure to produce

duce to us another hero, compared with whom, even the great Cuchullin, should be only an inferior personage; and who should rise as far above him, as Cuchullin rises above the rest.

Here, indeed, in the character and description of Fingal, Ossian triumphs almost unrivalled: For we may boldly defy all antiquity to shew us any hero equal to Fingal. Homer's Hector possesses several great and amiable qualities; but Hector is a secondary personage in the *Iliad*, not the hero of the work. We see him only occasionally; we know much less of him than we do of Fingal; who not only in this epic poem, but in *Temora*, and throughout the rest of Ossian's works, is presented in all that variety of lights, which give the full display of a character. And though Hector faithfully discharges his duty to his country, his friends, and his family, he is tinged, however, with a degree of the same savage ferocity, which prevails among all the Homeric heroes. For we find him insulting over the fallen Patroclus, with the most cruel taunts, and telling him, when he lies in the agony of death, that Achilles cannot help him now; and that in a short time his body, stripped naked, and deprived of funeral honours, shall be devoured by the vultures*. Whereas, in the character of Fingal, concur almost all the qualities that can ennoble human nature; that can either make us admire the hero, or love the man. He is not only unconquerable in war, but he makes his people happy by his wisdom in the days of peace. He is truly the father of his people. He is known by the epithet of "Fingal of the mildest look;" and distinguished on every occasion, by humanity and generosity. He is merciful to his foes†; full of affection to his children;

* *Iliad* 16. 836. II. 17. 127.

† When he commands his sons, after Swaran is taken prisoner,

dren; full of concern about friends; and never mentions Agandecca, his first love, without the utmost tenderness. He is the universal protector of the distressed; "None ever went sad from Fingal."—"O Oscar! bend the strong in arms; but spare the feeble hand. Be thou a stream of many tides against the foes of thy people; but like the gale that moves the grass, to those who ask thine aid. So Tremor lived; such Trathal was; and such has Fingal been. My arm was the support of the injured; the weak rested behind the lightning of my steel."

These were the maxims of true heroism, to which he formed his grandson. His fame is represented as every where spread; the greatest heroes acknowledge his superiority; his enemies tremble at his name; and the highest encomium that can be bestowed on one whom the poet would most exalt, is to say, that his soul was like the soul of Fingal.

To do justice to the poet's merit, in supporting such a character as this, I must observe, what is not commonly attended to, that there is no part of poetical execution more difficult, than to draw a perfect character in such a manner, as to render it distinct and affecting to the mind. Some strokes of human imperfection and frailty, are what usually give us the most clear view, and the most sensible impression of a character

prisoner, to "pursue the rest of Lochlin, over the heath of Lena; that no vessel may hereafter bound on the dark-rolling waves of Inistore;" he means not assuredly, as some have misrepresented him, to order a general slaughter of the foes, and to prevent their saving themselves by flight; but, like a wise general, he commands his chiefs to render the victory complete, by a total rout of the enemy; that they might adventure no more for the future, to fit out any fleet against him or his allies.

character ; because they present to us a man, such as we have seen ; they recal known features of human nature. When poets attempt to go beyond this range, and describe a faultless hero, they, for the most part, set before us, a sort of vague undistinguishable character, such as the imagination cannot lay hold of, or realize to itself, as the object of affection. We know how much Virgil has failed in this particular. His perfect hero, Æneas, is an unanimated, insipid personage, whom we may pretend to admire, but whom no one can heartily love. But what Virgil has failed in, Ossian, to our astonishment, has successfully executed. His Fingal, though exhibited without any of the common human failings, is nevertheless a real man ; a character which touches and interests every reader. To this it has much contributed, that the poet has represented him as an old man ; and by this has gained the advantage of throwing around him a great many circumstances, peculiar to that age, which paint him to the fancy in a more distinct light. He is surrounded with his family ; he instructs his children in the principles of virtue ; he is narrative of his past exploits ; he is venerable with the gray locks of age ; he is frequently disposed to moralize, like an old man, on human vanity, and the prospect of death. There is more art, at least more felicity, in this, than may at first be imagined. For youth and old age, are the two states of human life, capable of being placed in the most picturesque lights. Middle age is more general and vague ; and has fewer circumstances peculiar to the idea of it. And when any object is in a situation, that admits it to be rendered particular, and to be clothed with a variety of circumstances, it always stands out more clear and full in poetical description.

Besides human personages, divine or supernatural agents are often introduced into epic poetry ; forming what is called the machinery of it ; which most critics

critics hold to be an essential part. The marvellous, it must be admitted, has always a great charm for the bulk of readers. It gratifies the imagination, and affords room for striking and sublime description. No wonder, therefore, that all poets should have a strong propensity towards it. But I must observe, that nothing is more difficult, than to adjust properly the marvellous with the probable. If a poet sacrifice probability, and fill his work with extravagant supernatural scenes, he spreads over it an appearance of romance and childish fiction; he transports his readers from this world, into a phantastick, visionary region; and loses that weight and dignity which should reign in epic poetry. No work, from which probability is altogether banished, can make a lasting or deep impression. Human actions and manners, are always the most interesting objects which can be presented to a human mind. All machinery, therefore, is faulty which withdraws these too much from view; or obscures them under a cloud of incredible fictions. Besides being temperately employed, machinery ought always to have some foundation in popular belief. A poet is by no means at liberty to invent what system of the marvellous he pleases: He must avail himself either of the religious faith, or the superstitious credulity of the country wherein he lives; so as to give an air of probability to events which are most contrary to the common course of nature.

In these respects, Ossian appears to me to have been remarkably happy. He has indeed followed the same course with Homer. For it is perfectly absurd to imagine, as some critics have done, that Homer's mythology was invented by him, in consequence of profound reflections on the benefit it would yield to poetry. Homer was no such refining genius. He found the traditionary stories on which he built his Iliad, mingled with the popular legends, concerning the

the intervention of the gods; and he adopted these, because they amused the fancy. Ossian, in like manner, found the tales of his country full of ghosts and spirits: It is likely he believed them himself; and he introduced them, because they gave his poems that solemn and marvellous cast, which suited his genius. This was the only machinery he could employ with propriety; because it was the only intervention of supernatural beings, which agreed with the common belief of the country. It was happy; because it did not interfere in the least, with the proper display of human characters and actions; because it had less of the incredible, than most other kinds of poetical machinery; and because it served to diversify the scene, and to heighten the subject by an awful grandeur, which is the great design of machinery.

As Ossian's mythology is peculiar to himself, and makes a considerable figure in his other poems, as well as in Fingal, it may be proper to make some observations on it, independent of its subserviency to epic composition. It turns for the most part on the appearances of departed spirits. These, consonantly to the notions of every rude age, are represented not as purely immaterial, but as thin airy forms, which can be visible or invisible at pleasure; their voice is feeble; their arm is weak: but they are endowed with knowledge more than human. In a separate state, they retain the same dispositions which animated them in this life. They ride on the wind? they bend their airy bows; and pursue deer formed of clouds. The ghosts of departed bards continue to sing. The ghosts of departed heroes frequent the fields of their former fame. "They rest together in their caves, and talk of mortal men. Their songs are of other worlds. They come sometimes to the ear of rest, and raise their feeble voice." All this presents to us much the same set of ideas, concerning spirits, as we find in the eleventh book of the *Odyssæy*, where Ulysses visits the regions of the

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dead: And in the twenty-third book of the Iliad, the ghost of Patroclus, after appearing to Achilles, vanishes precisely like one of Ossian's, emitting a shrill, feeble, cry, and melting away like smoke.

But though Homer's and Ossian's ideas concerning ghosts were of the same nature, we cannot but observe, that Ossian's ghosts are drawn with much stronger and livelier colours than those of Homer. Ossian describes ghosts with all the particularity of one who had seen and conversed with them, and whose imagination was full of the impression they had left upon it. He calls up those awful and tremendous ideas which the

—Simulacra modis pallentia miris,

are fitted to raise in the human mind; and which, in Shakespeare's style, "Harrow up the soul." Crugal's ghost, in particular, in the beginning of the second book of Fingal, may vie with any appearance of this kind, described by any epic or tragic poet whatever. Most poets would have contented themselves with telling us, that he resembled, in every particular, the living Crugal; that his form and dress were the same, only his face more pale and sad; and that he bore the mark of the wound by which he fell. But Ossian sets before our eyes a spirit from the invisible world, distinguished by all those features, which a strong astonished imagination would give to a ghost. "A dark-red stream of fire comes down from the hill. Crugal sat upon the beam; he that lately fell by the hand of Swaran, striving in the battle of heroes. His face is like the beam of the setting moon. His robes are of the clouds of the hill. His eyes are like two decaying flames. Dark is the wound of his breast. The stars dim-twinkled through his form; and his voice was like the sound of a distant stream." The circumstance of the stars being beheld, "Dim-twinkling through

“through his form,” is wonderfully picturesque; and conveys the most lively impression of his thin and shadowy substance. The attitude in which he is afterwards placed, and the speech put into his mouth, are full of that solemn and awful sublimity, which suits the subject. “Dim, and in tears, he stood and stretched his pale hand over the hero. Faintly he raised his feeble voice, like the gale of the reedy Lego. My ghost, O Connal! is on my native hills; but my corse is on the sands of Ullin. Thou shalt never talk with Crugal, or find his lone steps in the heath. I am light as the blast of Cromla; and I move like the shadow of mist. Connal, son of Colgar! I see the dark cloud of death. It hovers over the plains of Leno. The sons of green Erin shall fall. Remove from the field of ghosts. Like the darkened moon, he retired in the midst of the whistling blast.”

Several other appearances of spirits might be pointed out, as among the most sublime passages of Ossian's poetry. The circumstances of them are considerably diversified; and the scenery always suited to the occasion. “Oscar slowly ascends the hill. The meteors of night set on the heath before him. A distant torrent faintly roars. Unfrequent blasts rush through aged oaks. The half-enlightened moon sinks dim and red behind her hill. Feeble voices are heard on the heath. Oscar drew his sword.” Nothing can prepare the fancy more happily for the awful scene that is to follow:—“Frenmor came from his hill, at the voice of his mighty son. A cloud, like the steed of the stranger, supported his airy limbs. His robe is of the mist of Leno, that brings death to the people. His sword is a green meteor, half-extinguished. His face is without form, and dark. He sighed thrice over the hero: And thrice, the winds of the night roared around. Many were his words to Oscar. He

“slowly vanished like a mist that melts on the sunny
 “hill.” To appearances of this kind, we can find
 no parallel among the Greek or Roman poets. They
 bring to mind that noble description in the book of
 Job: “In thoughts from the visions of the night,
 “when deep sleep falleth on men, fear came upon
 “me, and trembling, which made all my bones to
 “shake. Then a spirit passed before my face. The
 “hair of my flesh stood up. It stood still; but I
 “could not discern the form thereof. An image
 “was before mine eyes. There was silence; and I
 “heard a voice—Shall mortal man be more just than
 “God*?”

As Ossian's supernatural beings are described with
 a surprising force of imagination, so they are intro-
 duced with propriety. We have only three ghosts in
 Fingal: That of Crugal, which comes to warn the
 host of impending destruction, and to advise them to
 save themselves by retreat; that of Everallin, the
 spouse of Ossian, which calls him to rise and rescue
 their son from danger; and that of Agandecca, which,
 just before the last engagement with Swaran, moves
 Fingal to pity, by mourning for the approaching de-
 struction of her kinsmen and people. In the other
 poems, ghosts sometimes appear when invoked to fore-
 tel futurity; frequently, according to the notions of
 these times, they come as forerunners of misfortune or
 death, to those whom they visit; sometimes they in-
 form their friends at a distance, of their own death;
 and sometimes they are introduced to heighten the
 scenery on some great and solemn occasion. “A
 “hundred oaks burn to the wind; and faint light
 “gleams over the heath. The ghosts of Ardven pass
 “through the beam; and shew their dim and distant
 “forms. Comala is half-unseen on her meteor; and
 “Hidallan is sullen and dim.” “The awful faces
 “of

* Job iv. 13—17

“ of other times, looked from the clouds of Crona.”
 “ Fercuth! I saw the ghost of night. Silent he stood
 “ on that bank; his robe of mist flew on the wind.
 “ I could behold his tears. An aged man he seemed,
 “ and full of thought.”

The ghosts of strangers mingle not with those of the natives. “ She is seen; but not like the daughters of the hill. Her robes are from the strangers land; and she is still alone.” When the ghost of one whom we had formerly known is introduced, the propriety of the living character is still preserved. This is remarkable in the appearance of Calmar’s ghost, in the poem intitled, “ The death of Cuchullin.” He seems to forebode Cuchullin’s death, and to beckon him to his cave. Cuchullin reproaches him for supposing that he could be intimidated by such prognostics. “ Why dost thou bend thy dark eyes on me, ghost of the car-borne Calmar! Would’st thou frighten me, O Matha’s son! from the battles of Cormac? Thy hand was not feeble in war; neither was thy voice for peace. How art thou changed, chief of Lara! if now thou dost advise to fly! Retire thou to thy cave: Thou art not Calmar’s ghost: He delighted in battle; and his arm was like the thunder of heaven.” Calmar makes no return to this seeming reproach: But “ He retired in his blast with joy; for he had heard the voice of his praise.” This is precisely the ghost of Achilles in Homer; who, notwithstanding all the dissatisfaction he expresses with his state in the region of the dead, as soon as he had heard his son Neoptolemus praised for his gallant behaviour, strode away with silent joy to rejoin the rest of the shades*.

It is a great advantage of Ossian’s mythology, that it is not local and temporary, like that of most other ancient poets; which of course is apt to seem to ridiculous, after the superstitions have passed away on

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which.

which it was founded. Ossian's mythology is, to speak so, the mythology of human nature; for it is founded on what has been the popular belief, in all ages and countries, and under all forms of religion, concerning the appearances of departed spirits. Homer's machinery is always lively and amusing; but far from being always supported with proper dignity. The indecent squabbles among his gods, surely do no honour to epic poetry. Whereas Ossian's machinery has dignity upon all occasions. It is indeed a dignity of the dark and awful kind; but this is proper: because coincident with the strain and spirit of the poetry. A light and gay mythology, like Homer's, would have been perfectly unsuitable to the subjects on which Ossian's genius was employed. But though his machinery be always solemn, it is not, however, always dreary or dismal; it is enlivened as much as the subject would permit, by those pleasant and beautiful appearances, which he sometimes introduces, of the spirits of the hill. These are gentle spirits; descending on sun-beams; fair-moving on the plain; their forms white and bright; their voices sweet; and their visits to men propitious. The greatest praise that can be given to the beauty of a living woman, is to say, "She is fair as the ghost of the hill; when it moves in a sun-beam at noon, over the silence of Morven."—"The hunter shall hear my voice from his booth. He shall fear, but love my voice. For sweet shall my voice be for my friends; for pleasant were they to me."

Besides ghosts, or the spirits of departed men, we find in Ossian some instances of other kinds of machinery. Spirits of a superior nature to ghosts are sometimes alluded to, which have power to embroil the deep; to call forth winds and storms, and pour them on the land of the stranger; to overturn forests, and to send death among the people. We have prodigies too; a shower of blood; and when some disaster

faster is befalling at a distance, the sound of death heard on the strings of Ossian's harp: all perfectly consonant, not only to the peculiar ideas of northern nations, but to the general current of a superstitious imagination in all countries. The description of Fingal's airy hall, in the poem called Berrathon, and of the ascent of Malvina into it, deserves particular notice, as remarkably noble and magnificent. But above all, the engagement of Fingal with the spirit of Loda, in Carricthura, cannot be mentioned without admiration. I forbear transcribing the passage, as it must have drawn the attention of every one who has read the works of Ossian. The undaunted courage of Fingal, opposed to all the terrors of the Scandinavian god; the appearance and the speech of that awful spirit; the wound which he receives, and the shriek which he sends forth, "as rolled into himself, he rose upon the wind;" are full of the most amazing and terrible majesty. I know no passage more sublime in the writings of any uninspired author. The fiction is calculated to aggrandize the hero; which it does to a high degree; nor is it so unnatural or wild a fiction, as might at first be thought. According to the notions of those times, supernatural beings were material, and consequently, vulnerable. The spirit of Loda was not acknowledged as a deity by Fingal; he did not worship at the stone of his power; he plainly considered him as the god of his enemies only; as a local deity, whose dominion extended no farther than to the regions where he was worshipped; who had, therefore, no title to threaten him, and no claim to his submission. We know there are poetical precedents of great authority, for fictions fully as extravagant; and if Homer be forgiven for making Diomed attack and wound in battle, the gods whom that chief himself worshipped, Ossian surely is pardonable

donable for making his hero superior to the god of a foreign territory*.

Notwithstanding the poetical advantages which I have ascribed to Ossian's machinery, I acknowledge it would have been much more beautiful and perfect, had the author discovered some knowledge of a supreme being. Although his silence on this head has been accounted for by the learned and ingenious translator in a very probable manner, yet still it must be held a considerable disadvantage to the poetry. For the most august and lofty ideas that can embellish poetry are derived from the belief of a divine administration of the universe: And hence the invocation of a supreme Being, or at least of some superior powers who are conceived as presiding over human

* The scene of this encounter of Fingal with the spirit of Loda is laid in Inistore or the islands of Orkney; and in the description of Fingal's landing there, it is said, "A rock bends along the coast with all its echoing wood." On "the top is the circle of Loda, with the mossy stone of power." In confirmation of Ossian's topography, it is proper to acquaint the reader, that in these Islands, as I have been well informed, there are many pillars, and circles of stones, still remaining, known by the name of the stones and circles of Loda, or Loden; to which some degree of superstitious regard is annexed to this day. These Islands, until the year 1468, made a part of the Danish dominions. Their ancient language, of which there are yet some remains among the natives, is called the Norse; and is a dialect, not of the Celtic, but of the Scandinavian tongue. The manners and the superstitions of the inhabitants, are quite distinct from those of the Highlands and western isles of Scotland. Their ancient songs too, are of a different strain and character, turning upon magical incantations and evocations from the dead, which were the favourite subjects of the old Runic poetry. They have many traditions among them of wars in former times with the inhabitants of the western islands.

human affairs, the solemnities of religious worship, prayers preferred, and assistance implored on critical occasions, appear with great dignity in the works of almost all poets as chief ornaments of their compositions. The absence of all such religious ideas from Ossian's poetry, is a sensible blank in it: the more to be regretted, as we can easily imagine what an illustrious figure they would have made under the management of such a genius as his; and how finely they would have been adapted to many situations which occur in his works.

After so particular an examination of *Fingal*, it were needless to enter into as full a discussion of the conduct of *Temora*, the other epic poem. Many of the the same observations, especially with regard to the great characteristics of heroic poetry, apply to both. The high merit, however, of *Temora*, requires that we should not pass it by without some remarks.

The scene of *Temora*, as of *Fingal*, is laid in Ireland; and the action is of a posterior date. The subject is, an expedition of the hero, to dethrone and punish a bloody usurper, and to restore the possession of the kingdom to the posterity of the lawful prince; an undertaking worthy of the justice and heroism of the great *Fingal*. The action is one and complete. The poem opens with the descent of *Fingal* on the coast, and the consultation held among the chiefs of the enemy. The murder of the young prince *Cornac*, which was the cause of the war, being antecedent to the epic action, is introduced with great propriety as an episode in the first book. In the progress of the poem, three battles are described, which rise in their importance above one another; the success is various, and the issue for some time doubtful; till at last, *Fingal* brought into distress, by the wound of his great general *Gaul*, and the death of his son *Fillan*, assumes the command himself, and
having

having slain the Irish king in single combat, restores the rightful heir to his throne.

Temora has perhaps less fire than the other epic poem; but in return it has more variety, more tenderness, and more magnificence. The reigning idea, so often presented to us of "Fingal in the last of his fields," is venerable and affecting; nor could any more noble conclusion be thought of, than the aged hero, after so many successful achievements, taking his leave of battles, and with all the solemnities of those times resigning his spear to his son. The events are less crowded in *Temora* than in *Fingal*; actions and characters are more particularly displayed; we are let into the transactions of both hosts; and informed of the adventures of the night as well as of the day. The still pathetic, and the romantic scenery of several of the night adventures, so remarkably suited to Ossian's genius, occasion a fine diversity in the poem; and are happily contrasted with the military operations of the day.

In most of our author's poems, the horrors of war are softened by intermixed scenes of love and friendship. In *Fingal*, these are introduced as episodes; in *Temora*, we have an incident of this nature wrought into the body of the piece; in the adventure of Cathmor and Sulmalla. This forms one of the most conspicuous beauties of that poem. The distress of Sumalla, disguised and unknown among strangers, her tender and anxious concern for the safety of Cathmor, her dream and her melting remembrance of the land of her fathers; Cathmor's emotion when he first discovers her, his struggles to conceal and suppress his passion, lest it should unman him in the midst of war, though "his soul poured forth in secret, when he beheld her fearful eye;" and the last interview between them, when overcome by her tenderness, he lets her know he had discovered her, and confesses his passion; are all wrought

wrought up with the most exquisite sensibility and delicacy.

Besides the characters which appeared in Fingal, several new ones are here introduced; and though, as they are all the characters of warriors, bravery is the predominant feature, they are nevertheless diversified in a sensible and striking manner. Foldath, for instance, the general of Cathmor, exhibits the perfect picture of a savage chieftain: Bold, and daring, but presumptuous, cruel, and overbearing. He is distinguished, on his first appearance, as the friend of the tyrant Cairbar; "His stride his haughty; his red eye rolls in wrath." In his person and whole deportment, he is contrasted with the mild and wise Hidalla, another leader of the same army, on whose humanity and gentleness he looks with great contempt. He professedly delights in strife and blood. He insults over the fallen. He is imperious in his counsels, and factious when they are not followed. He is unrelenting in all his schemes of revenge, even to the length of denying the funeral song to the dead; which, from the injury thereby done to their ghosts, was in those days considered as the greatest barbarity. Fierce to the last, he comforts himself in his dying moments with thinking that his ghost shall often leave its blast to rejoice over the graves of those he had slain: Yet Ossian, ever prone to the pathetic, has contrived to throw into his account of the death, even of this man, some tender circumstances; by the moving description of his daughter, Dardulena, the last of his race.

The character of Foldath tends much to exalt that of Cathmor, the chief commander, which is distinguished by the most humane virtues. He abhors all fraud and cruelty, is famous for his hospitality to strangers; open to every generous sentiment, and to every soft and compassionate feeling. He is so amiable as to divide the reader's attachment between him and

and the hero of the poem; though our author has artfully managed it so, as to make Cathmor himself indirectly acknowledge Fingal's superiority, and to appear somewhat apprehensive of the event, after the death of Fillan, which he knew would call forth Fingal in all his might. It is very remarkable, that although Ossian has introduced into his poems three complete heroes, Cuchullin, Cathmor, and Fingal, he has, however, sensibly distinguished each of their characters. Cuchullin is particularly honourable; Cathmor particularly amiable; Fingal wise and great, retaining, an ascendant peculiar to himself in whatever light he is viewed.

But the favourite figure in *Temora*, and the one most highly finished, is Fillan. His character is of that sort, for which Ossian shews a particular fondness; an eager fervant young warrior, fired with all the impatient enthusiasm for military glory, peculiar to that time of life. He had sketched this in the description of his own son Oscar; but as he has extended it more fully in Fillan, and as the character is so consonant to the epic strain, though, so far as I remember, not placed in such a conspicuous light by any other epic poet, it may be worth while to attend a little to Ossian's management of it in this instance.

Fillan was the youngest of all the sons of Fingal; younger, it is plain, than his nephew Oscar, by whose fame and great deeds in war, we may naturally suppose his ambition to have been highly stimulated. Withal, as he is younger, he is described as more rash and fiery. His first appearance is soon after Oscar's death, when he was employed to watch the motions of the foe by night. In a conversation with his brother Ossian, on that occasion, we learn that it was not long since he began to lift the spear. "Few
"are the marks of my sword in battle; but my soul
"is fire." He is with some difficulty restrained by

by Ossian from going to attack the enemy; and complains to him, that his father had never allowed him any opportunity of signalizing his valour. "The king hath not remarked my sword; I go forth with the crowd; I return without my fame." Soon after, when Fingal, according to custom, was to appoint one of his chiefs to command the army, and each was standing forth, and putting in his claim to this honour, Fillan is presented in the following most picturesque and natural attitude. "On his spear stood the son of Clatho, in the wandering of his locks. Thrice he raised his eyes to Fingal: his voice thrice failed him as he spoke. Fillan could not boast of battles; at once he strode away. Bent over a distant stream he stood; the tear hung in his eye. He struck, at times, the thistle's head, with his inverted spear." No less natural and beautiful is the description of Fingal's paternal emotion on this occasion. "Nor is he unseen of Fingal. Side-long he beheld his son. He beheld him with bursting joy. He hid the big tear with his locks, and turned amidst his crowded soul." The command, for that day, being given to Gaul, Fillan rushes amidst the thickest of the foe, saves Gaul's life, who is wounded by a random arrow, and distinguishes himself so in battle, that "the days of old return on Fingal's mind, as he beholds the renown of his son. As the sun rejoices from the cloud, over the tree his beams have raised, whilst it shakes its lonely head on the heath, so joyful is the king over Fillan." Sedate, however, and wise, he mixes the praise which he bestows on him with some reprehension of his rashness, "My son, I saw thy deeds, and my soul was glad. Thou art brave, son of Clatho, but headlong in the strife. So did not Fingal advance, though he never feared a foe. Let thy people be a ridge behind thee; they are thy strength in the field. Then shalt thou be

“ long renowned, and behold the tombs of thy fa-
 “ thers.”

On the next day, the greatest and the last of Fillan's life, the charge is committed to him of leading on the host to battle. Fingal's speech to his troops on this occasion is full of noble sentiment; and where he recommends his son to their care, extremely touching. “ A young beam is before you; few are
 “ his steps to war. They are few, but he is valiant;
 “ defend my dark-haired son. Bring him back with
 “ joy; hereafter he may stand alone. His form is
 “ like his fathers; his soul is a flame of their fire.” When the battle begins, the poet puts forth his strength to describe the exploits of the young hero; who, at last encountering and killing with his own hand Foldath the opposite general, attains the pinnacle of glory. In what follows, when the fate of Fillan is drawing near, Ossian, if any where, excels himself. Foldath being slain, and a general rout begun, there was no resource left to the enemy but in the great Cathmor himself, who in this extremity descends from the hill, where, according to the custom of those princes, he surveyed the battle. Observe how this critical event is wrought up by the poet. “ Wide spreading over echoing Lubar, the flight of
 “ Bolga is rolled along. Fillan hung forward on
 “ their steps; and strewed the heath with dead.
 “ Fingal rejoiced over his son. Blue-shielded Cath-
 “ mor rose. Son of Alpin, bring the harp! Give
 “ Fillan's praise to the wind; raise high his praise in
 “ my hall, while yet he shines in war. Leave blue-
 “ eyed Clatho! leave thy hall; behold that early
 “ beam of thine! The host is withered in its course.
 “ No farther look——it is dark——light-trembling
 “ from the harp, strike virgins! strike the sound.” The sudden interruption, and suspense of the narration on Cathmor's rising from his hill, the abrupt bursting into the praise of Fillan, and the passionate
 apostrophe

apostrophe to his mother Clatho, are admirable efforts of poetical art, in order to interest us in Fillan's danger; and the whole is heightened by the immediately following simile, one of the most magnificent and sublime that is to be met with in any poet, and which, if it had been found in Homer, would have been the frequent subject of admiration to critics; "Fillan is like a spirit of heaven, that descends
 " from the skirt of his blast. The troubled ocean
 " feels his steps, as he strides from wave to wave.
 " His path kindles behind him; islands shake their
 " heads on the heaving seas."

But the poet's art is not yet exhausted. The fall of this noble young warrior, or, in Ossian's style, the extinction of this beam of heaven, could not be rendered too interesting and affecting. Our attention is naturally drawn towards Fingal. He beholds from his hill the rising of Cathmor, and the danger of his son. But what shall he do? "Shall Fingal rise to
 " his aid, and take the sword of Luno? What then
 " should become of thy fame, son of the white-bo-
 " somed Clatho? Turn not thine eyes from Fingal,
 " daughter of Inishore! I shall not quench thy early
 " beam. No cloud of mine shall rise, my son, upon
 " thy soul of fire." Struggling between concern for the fame, and fear for the safety of his son, he withdraws from the sight of the engagement; and dispatches Ossian in haste to the field, with this affectionate and delicate injunction. "Father of Oscar!" addressing him by a title which on this occasion has the highest propriety, "Father of Oscar! lift the
 " spear; defend the young in arms. But conceal
 " thy steps from Fillan's eyes: He must not know
 " that I doubt his steel." Ossian arrived too late. But unwilling to describe Fillan vanquished, the poet suppresses all the circumstances of the combat with Cathmor; and only shews us the dying hero. We see him animated to the end with the same martial

and ardent spirit? breathing his last in bitter regret for being so early cut off from the field of glory. “*Offian, lay me in that hollow rock. “ Raise no stone above me; least one should ask about my fame. I am fallen in the first of my fields; fallen without renown. Let thy voice alone, send joy to my flying soul. Why should the bard know where dwells the early-fallen Fillan?*” He who after tracing the circumstances of this story, shall deny that our bard is possessed of high sentiment and high art must be strangely prejudiced indeed. Let him read the story of Pallas in Virgil, which is of a similar kind; and after all the praise he may justly bestow on the elegant and finished description of that amiable author, let him say which of the two poets unfold most of the human soul. I wave insisting on any more of the particulars in *Temora*; as my aim is rather to lead the reader into the genius and spirit of *Offian’s* poetry, than to dwell on all his beauties.

The judgment and art discovered in conducting works of such length as *Fingal* and *Temora*, distinguish them from the other poems in this collection. The smaller pieces, however, contain particular beauties no less eminent. They are historical poems, generally of the elegiac kind; and plainly discover themselves to be the work of the same author. One consistent face of manners is every where presented to us; one spirit of poetry reigns; the masterly hand of *Offian* appears throughout; the same rapid and animated style; the same strong colouring of imagination, and the same glowing sensibility of heart. Besides the unity which belongs to the compositions of one man, there is moreover a certain unity of subject which very happily connects all these poems. They form the poetical history of the age of *Fingal*. The same race of heroes whom we had met with in the greater poems, *Cuchallin*, *Oscar*, *Connal*, and *Gaul*, return again upon the stage; and *Fingal* him-
self

self is always the principal figure, presented on every occasion, with equal magnificence, nay, rising upon us to the last. The circumstances of Ossian's old age and blindness, his surviving all his friends, and his relating their great exploits to Malvina, the spouse or mistress of his beloved son Oscar, furnish the finest poetical situations that fancy could devise for that tender pathetic which reigns in Ossian's poetry.

On each of these poems, there might be room for separate observations, with regard to the conduct and disposition of the incidents, as well as to the beauty of the descriptions and sentiments. Carthou is a regular and highly finished piece. The main story is very properly introduced by Clessamor's relation of the adventure of his youth; and this introduction is finely heightened by Fingal's song of mourning over Moina; in which Ossian, ever fond of doing honour to his father, has contrived to distinguish him, for being an eminent poet, as well as warrior. Fingal's song upon this occasion, when "his thousand bards" leaned forwards from their seats, to hear the voice "of the king," is inferior to no passage in the whole book; and with great judgment put in his mouth, as the seriousness, no less than the sublimity of the strain, is peculiarly suited to the hero's character. In Dar-thula, are assembled almost all the tender images that can touch the heart of man; friendship, love, the affections of parents, sons, and brothers, the distress of the aged, and the unavailing bravery of the young. The beautiful address to the moon, with which the poem opens, and the transition from thence to the subject, most happily prepare the mind for that train of affecting events that is to follow. The story is regular, dramatic, interesting to the last. He who can read it without emotion may congratulate himself, if he pleases, upon being completely armed against sympathetic sorrow. As Fingal had no occasion of appearing in the action of this poem, Ossian

makes a very artful transition from his narration, to what was passing in the halls of Selma. The sound heard there on the strings of his harp, the concern which Fingal shows on hearing it, and the invocation of the ghosts of their fathers to receive the heroes falling in a distant land, are introduced with great beauty of imagination to increase the solemnity, and to diversify the scenery of the poem.

Carrie-thura is full of the most sublime dignity; and has this advantage of being more cheerful in the subject, and more happy in the catastrophe than most of the other poems: Though tempered at the same time with episodes in that strain of tender melancholy, which seems to have been the great delight of Ossian and the bards of his age. Lathmon is peculiarly distinguished by high generosity of sentiment. This is carried so far, particularly in the refusal of Gaul, on one side, to take the advantage of a sleeping foe; and of Lathmon, on the other, to overpower by numbers the two young warriors, as to recal into one's mind the manners of chivalry; some resemblance to which may perhaps be suggested by other incidents in this collection of poems. Chivalry, however, took rise in an age and country too remote from those of Ossian to admit the suspicion that the one could have borrowed any thing from the other. So far as chivalry had any real existence, the same military enthusiasm, which gave birth to it in the feudal times, might, in the days of Ossian, that is, in the infancy of a rising state, through the operation of the same cause, very naturally produce effects of the same kind on the minds and manners of men. So far as chivalry was an ideal system existing only in romance, it will not be thought surprising, when we reflect on the account before given of the Celtic bards, that this imaginary refinement of heroic manners should be found among them, as much, at least, as among the *Trobadores*, or strolling Provençal

Provençal bards, in the 10th or 11th century; whose songs, it is said, first gave rise to these romantic ideas of heroism, which for so long a time enchanted Europe *. Ossian's heroes have all the gallantry and generosity of those fabulous knights, without their extravagance; and his love scenes have native tenderness, without any mixture of those forced and unnatural conceits which abound in the old romances. The adventures related by our poet which resemble the most those of romance, concern women who follow their lovers to war disguised in the armour of men; and these are so managed as to produce, in the discovery, several of the most interesting situations; one beautiful instance of which may be seen in Carric-thura, and another in Calthou and Colmal.

Oithona presents a situation of a different nature. In the absence of her lover Gaul, she had been carried off and ravished by Dunrommath. Gaul discovers the place where she is kept concealed, and comes to revenge her. The meeting of the two lovers, the sentiments and the behaviour of Oithona on that occasion, are described with such tender and exquisite propriety, as does the greatest honour both to the art and to the delicacy of our author: and would have been admired in any poet of the most refined age. The conduct of Croma must strike every reader as remarkably judicious and beautiful. We are to be prepared for the death of Malvina, which is related in the succeeding poem. She is therefore introduced in person; "she has heard a voice in a dream; she feels the fluttering of her soul;" and in a most moving lamentation addressed to her beloved Oscar, she sings her own Death Song. Nothing could be calculated with more art to soothe and comfort her, than the story which Ossian relates. In the young and brave
Fovargormo,

* Vid. Huetius de origine fabularum Romanensium.

Fovargormo, another Oſcar is introduced; his praiſes are ſung; and the happineſs is ſet before her of thoſe who die in their youth, “when their renown is around them; before the feeble behold them in the hall, and ſmile at their trembling hands.”

But no where does Oſſian’s genius appear to greater advantage, than in Berrathon, which is reckoned the concluſion of his ſongs, “The laſt ſound of the Voice of Cona.”

Qualis olor noto poſiturus littore vitam,
Ingemit, et mæſtis mulcens concentibus auras
Praſago queritur venientia funera cantu.

The whole train of ideas is admirably ſuited to the ſubject. Every thing is full of that inviſible world, into which the aged bard believes himſelf now ready to enter. The airy hall of Fingal preſents itſelf to his view; “He ſees the cloud that ſhall receive his gholt; he beholds the miſt that ſhall form his robe when he appears on his hill;” and all the natural objects around him ſeem to carry the preſages of death. “The thistle ſhakes its beard to the wind. The flower hangs its heavy head—it ſeems to ſay, I am covered with the drops of heaven; the time of my departure is near, and the blaſt that ſhall ſcatter my leaves.” Malvina’s death is hinted to him in the moſt delicate manner by the ſon of Alpin. His lamentation over her; her apotheoſis, or aſcent to the habitation of heroes; and the introduction to the ſtory which follows from the mention which Oſſian ſuppoſes the father of Malvina to make of him in the hall of Fingal, are all in the higheſt ſpirit of poetry. “And doſt thou remember Oſſian, O Toſcar, ſon of Comlach? The battles of our youth were many; our ſwords went together to the field.” Nothing could be more proper than to end his ſongs with recording an exploit of the father of that Malvina, of whom his heart was now ſo full;

full; and who, from first to last, had been such a favourite object throughout all his poems.

The scene of most of Ossian's poems is laid in Scotland, or in the coast of Ireland, opposite to the territories of Fingal. When the scene is in Ireland, we perceive no change of manners from those of Ossian's native country. For as Ireland was undoubtedly peopled with Celtic tribes, the language, customs, and religion of both nations were the same. They had been separated from one another by migration, only a few generations, as it should seem, before our poet's age; and they still maintained a close and frequent intercourse. But when the poet relates the expeditions of any of his heroes to the Scandinavian coast, or to the Islands of Orkney, which were then part of the Scandinavian territory, as he does in Carric-thura, Sulmalla of Lumon, and Cathloda, the case is quite altered. Those countries were inhabited by nations of the Teutonic descent, who in their manners and religious rites differed widely from the Celtæ; and it is curious and remarkable, to find this difference clearly pointed out in the poems of Ossian. His descriptions bear the native marks of one who was present in the expeditions which he relates, and who describes what he had seen with his own eyes. No sooner are we carried to Lochlin, or the islands of Inistore, than we perceive that we are in a foreign region. New objects begin to appear. We meet every where with the stones and circles of Loda, that is, Odin, the great Scandinavian deity. We meet with the divinations and enchantments, for which it is well known those northern nations were early famous. "There, mixed with the murmur of waters, rose the voice of aged men, who called the forms of night to aid them in their war;" whilst the Caledonian chiefs who assisted them, are described as standing at a distance, heedless of their rites. That ferocity of manners which distinguished those nations, also becomes.

comes conspicuous. In the combats of their chiefs there is a peculiar savageness; even their women are bloody and fierce. The spirit, and the very ideas of Regner Lodbrog, that northern scolder, whom I formerly quoted occur to us again. "The hawks," Ossian makes one of the Scandinavian chiefs say, "rush from all their winds: they are wont to trace my course. We rejoiced three days above the dead, and called the hawks of heaven. They came from all their winds, to feast on the foes of An-nir."

Dismissing now the separate consideration of any of our author's works, I proceed to make some observations on his manner of writing, under the general heads of Description, Imagery, and Sentiment.

A poet of original genius is always distinguished by his talent for description*. A second rate writer discerns nothing new or peculiar in the object he means to describe. His conceptions of it are vague and loose; his expressions feeble; and of course the object is presented to us indistinctly and as through a cloud. But a true poet makes us imagine that we see it before our eyes: he catches the distinguishing features; he gives it the colours of life and reality; he places it in such a light that a painter could copy after him. This happy talent is chiefly owing to a lively imagination, which first receives a strong impression of the object; and then, by a proper selection of capital picturesque circumstances employed in describing it, transmits that impression in its full force to the imaginations of others. That Ossian possesses this descriptive power in a high degree, we have a clear proof from the effect which his descriptions produce upon the imaginations of those who read him with any degree

* See the rules of poetical description excellently illustrated by Lord Kames, in his *Elements of Criticism*, vol. iii. chap. 21. Of narration and description.

degree of attention and taste. Few poets are more interesting. We contract an intimate acquaintance with his principal heroes. The characters, the manners, the face of the country become familiar; we even think we could draw the figure of his ghosts: In a word, whilst reading him, we are transported as into a new region, and dwell among his objects as if they were all real.

It were easy to point out several instances of exquisite painting in the works of our author. Such, for instance, as the scenery with which *Temora* opens, and the attitude in which *Cairbar* is there presented to us; the description of the young prince *Cornac*, in the same book; and the ruins of *Balclutha* in *Carthou*. “I have seen the walls of *Balclutha*, but they
“were desolate. The fire had resounded in the halls;
“and the voice of the people his heard no more.
“The stream of *Clutha* was removed from its place
“by the fall of the walls. The thistle shook there
“its lonely head: The moss whistled to the wind.
“The fox looked out from the windows; the rank
“grass of the wall waved round his head. Desolate
“is the dwelling of *Moina*; silence is in the house
of her father’s. Nothing also can be more natural and lively than the manner in which *Carthou* afterwards describes how the conflagration of his city affected him when a child: “Have I not seen the
“fallen *Balclutha*? And shall I feast with *Comhal*’s
“son? *Comhal*! who threw his fire in the midst of my
“father’s hall! I was young, and knew not the cause
“why the virgins wept. The columns of smoke
“pleased mine eye, when they rose above my walls:
“I often looked back with gladness, when my friends
“fled above the hill. But when the years of my
“youth came on, I beheld the moss of my fallen
“walls. My sigh arose with the morning; and my
“tears descended with night. Shall I not fight, I
“said to my soul, against the children of my foes?
“And

“ And I will fight, O bard ! I feel the strength of my
 “ soul.” In the same poem, the assembling of the
 chiefs round Fingal, who had been warned of some
 impending danger by the appearance of a prodigy, is
 described with so many picturesque circumstances,
 that one imagines himself present in the assembly.
 “ The king alone beheld the terrible fight, and he
 “ foresaw the death of his people. He came in
 “ silence to his hall, and took his father’s spear;
 “ the mail rattled on his breast. The heroes rose a-
 “ round. They looked in silence on each other,
 “ marking the eyes of Fingal. They saw the battle
 “ in his face. A thousand shields are placed at once
 “ on their arms ; and they drew a thousand swords.
 “ The hall of Selma brightened around. The clang
 “ of arms ascends. The gray dogs howl in their
 “ place. No word is among the mighty chiefs.
 “ Each marked the eyes of the king ; and half as-
 “ sued his spear.”

It has been objected to Ossian, that his descriptions of military actions are imperfect, and much less diversified by circumstances than those of Homer. This is in some measure true. The amazing fertility of Homer’s invention is no where so much displayed as in the incidents of his battles, and in the little history pieces he gives of the persons slain. Nor indeed, with regard to the talent of description, can too much be said in praise of Homer. Every thing is alive in his writings. The colours with which he paints are those of nature. But Ossian’s genius was of a different kind from Homer’s. It led him to hurry towards grand objects rather than to amuse himself with particulars of less importance. He could dwell on the death of a favourite hero : but that of a private man seldom stopped his rapid course. Homer’s genius was more comprehensive than Ossian’s. It included a wider circle of objects ; and could work up any incident into description. Ossian’s was more limited :

limited ; but the region within which it chiefly exerted itself was the highest of all, the region of the pathetic and sublime.

We must not imagine, however, that Ossian's battles consist only of general indistinct description. Such beautiful incidents are sometimes introduced, and the circumstances of the persons slain so much diversified, as show that he could have embellished his military scenes with an abundant variety of particulars, if his genius had led him to dwell upon them. One man " is stretched in the dust of his native land ; " he fell, where often he had spread the feast, and often " raised the voice of the harp." The maid of Inistore is introduced, in a moving apostrophe, as weeping for another ; and a third, " as rolled in the dust " he lifted his faint eyes to the king," is remembered and mourned by Fingal as the friend of Agandecca. The blood pouring from the wound of one who is slain by night, is heard " hissing on the half-extinguished oak," which had been kindled for giving light : Another, climbing a tree to escape from his foe, is pierced by his spear from behind ; " shrieking, panting he fell ; whilst moss and withered " branches pursue his fall, and strew the blue arms " of Gaul." Never was a finer picture drawn of the ardour of two youthful warriors than the following : " I saw Gaul in his armour, and my soul was mixed with his : For the fire of the battle was in his " eyes ; he looked to the foe with joy. We spoke " the words of friendship in secret ; and the lighting of our swords poured together. We drew " them behind the wood, and tried the strength of " our arms in the empty air."

Ossian is always concise in his descriptions, which adds much to their beauty and force. For it is a great mistake to imagine, that a crowd of particulars, or a very full and extended style, is of advantage to description. On the contrary, such a diffuse manner for the most part weakens it. Any one redundant

circumstance is a nuisance. It encumbers and loads the fancy, and renders the main image indistinct. "Obstat," as Quintilian says with regard to style, "quicquid non adjuvat." To be concise in description is one thing; and to be general, is another. No description that rests in generals can possibly be good; it can convey no lively idea; for it is of particulars only that we have a distinct conception. But at the same time, no strong imagination dwells long upon any one particular; or heaps together a mass of trivial ones. By the happy choice of some one, or of a few that are the most striking, it presents the image more complete, shows us more at one glance, than a feeble imagination is able to do, by turning its object round and round into a variety of lights. Tacitus is of all prose writers the most concise. He has even a degree of abruptness resembling our author: Yet no writer is more eminent for lively description. When Fingal, after having conquered the haughty Swaran, proposes to dismiss him with honour: "Raise to-morrow thy white sails to the wind, thou brother of Agandecca!" he conveys, by thus addressing his enemy, a stronger impression of the emotions then passing within his mind, than if the whole paragraph had been spent in describing the conflict between resentment against Swaran and the tender remembrance of his ancient love. No amplification is needed to give us the most full idea of a hardy veteran, after the few following words: "His shield is marked with the strokes of battle; his red eye depicts danger." When Osear, left alone, was surrounded by foes, "he stood," it is said, "growing in his place, like the flood of the narrow vale;" a happy representation of one, who, by daring intrepidity in the midst of danger, seems to increase in his appearance, and becomes more formidable every moment, like the sudden rising of the torrent hemmed in by the valley. And a whole crowd of ideas, concerning the circumstances of domestic sorrow occasioned

ed by a young warrior's first going forth to battle, is poured upon the mind by these words: "Calmar
 "leaned on his father's spear; that spear which he
 "brought from Lara's hall, when the soul of his mo-
 "ther was sad."

The conciseness of Ossian's descriptions is the more proper on account of his subjects. Descriptions of gay and smiling scenes may, without any disadvantage be amplified and prolonged. Force is not the predominant quality expected in these. The description may be weakened by being diffuse, yet, notwithstanding, may be beautiful still. Whereas, with respect to grand, solemn, and pathetic subjects, which are Ossian's chief field, the case is very different. In these, energy is above all things required. The imagination must be seized at once, or not at all; and is far more deeply impressed by one strong and ardent image, than by the anxious minuteness of laboured illustration.

But Ossian's genius, though chiefly turned towards the sublime and pathetic, was not confined to it: In subjects also of grace and delicacy, he discovers the hand of a master. Take for an example the following elegant description of Agandecca, wherein the tenderness of Tibulus seems united with the majesty of Virgil. "The daughter of the snow overheard,
 "and left the hall of her secret sigh. She came in
 "all her beauty; like the moon from the cloud of
 "the east. Loveliness was around her as light.
 "Her steps were like the music of songs. She saw
 "the youth and loved him, He was the stolen sigh
 "of her soul. Her blue eyes rolled on him in secret:
 "And she blest the chief of Morven." Several other instances might be produced of the feelings of love and friendship painted by our author with a natural and happy delicacy.

The simplicity of Ossian's manner adds great beauty to his descriptions, and indeed to his whole poet-

ry. We meet with no affected ornaments ; no forced refinement ; no marks either in style or thought of a studied endeavour to shine and sparkle. Ossian appears every where to be prompted by his feelings ; and to speak from the abundance of his heart. I remember no more than one instance of what can be called quaint thought in this whole collection of his works. It is in the first book of Fingal, where, from the tombs of two lovers, two lonely yews are mentioned to have sprung, " whose branches wished " to meet on high." This sympathy of the trees with the lovers, may be reckoned to border on an Italian conceit ; and it is somewhat curious to find this single instance of that sort of wit in our Celtic poetry.

The " joy of grief," is one of Ossian's remarkable expressions, several times repeated. If any one shall think that it needs to be justified by a precedent, he may find it twice used by Homer ; in the Iliad, when Achilles is visited by the ghost of Patroclus ; and in the Odyssey, when Ulysses meets his mother in the shades. On both these occasions, the heroes, melted with tenderness, lament their not having it in their power to throw their arms round the ghost, " that we might," say they, " in a mutual embrace " enjoy the delight of grief."

—Amplexu cernumno oblectemur*.

But in truth the expression stands in need of no defence from authority ; for it is a natural and just expression, and conveys a clear idea of that gratification, which a virtuous heart often feels in the indulgence of a tender melancholy. Ossian makes a very proper distinction between this gratification, and the destructive effect of overpowering grief. " There " is a joy in grief, when peace dwells in the breasts of " the sad. But sorrow wastes the mournful, O " daughter of Toscar, and their days are few." To " give the joy of grief," generally signifies to raise the strain

* Odyss. II. 211. Iliad 23. 98.

strain of soft and grave music; and finely characterises the taste of Ossian's age and country. In those days, when the songs of bards were the great delight of heroes, the tragic muse was held in chief honour; gallant actions, and virtuous sufferings, were the chosen theme; preferably to that light and trifling strain of poetry and music, which promotes light and trifling manners, and serves to emasculate the mind. "Strike the harp in my hall," said the great Fingal, in the midst of youth and victory, "Strike the harp in my hall, and let Fingal hear the song. Pleasant is the joy of grief! It is like the shower of spring, when it softens the branch of the oak; and the young leaf lifts its green head. Sing on, O bards! To-morrow we lift the sail †."

Personal epithets have been much used by all the poets of the most ancient ages: and when well chosen, not general and unmeaning, they contribute not a little to render the style descriptive and animated. Besides epithets founded on bodily distinctions, akin to many of Homer's, we find in Ossian several which are remarkably beautiful and poetical. Such as, Oscar of the future fights, Fingal of the mildest look, Carril of other times, the mildly blushing Everallin; Bragela, the lonely sun-beam of Dunscaich; a Cul-dee, the son of the secret cell.

But of all the ornaments employed in descriptive poetry, comparisons or similes are the most splendid. These chiefly form what is called the imagery of a poem: and as they abound so much in the works of Ossian, and are commonly among the favourite passages of all poets, it may be expected that I should be somewhat particular in my remarks upon them.

A poetical simile always supposes two objects brought together, between which there is some near relation or connection in the fancy. What that re-

lation ought to be, cannot be precisely defined. For various, almost numberless, are the analogies formed among objects, by a sprightly imagination. The relation of actual similitude, or likeness of appearance, is far from being the only foundation of poetical comparison. Sometimes a resemblance in the effect produced by two objects, is made the connecting principle: Sometimes a resemblance in one of the distinguishing property or circumstance. Very often two objects are brought together in a simile, though they resemble one another, strictly speaking, in nothing, only because they raise in the mind a train of similar, and what may be called concordant, ideas; so that the remembrance of the one, when recalled, serves to quicken and heighten the impression made by the other. Thus, to give an instance from our poet, the pleasure with which an old man looks down on the exploits of his youth, has certainly no direct resemblance to the beauty of a fine evening; farther than that both agree in producing a certain calm, placid joy. Yet Ossian has founded upon this, one of the most beautiful comparisons that is to be met with in any poet. "Wilt thou not listen, son of the rock, "to the song of Ossian? My soul is full of other "times; the joy of my youth returns. Thus, the "sun appears in the west, after the steps of his "brightness have moved behind a storm. The green "hills lift their dewy heads. The blue streams rejoice in the vale. The aged hero comes forth on "his staff; and his gray hair glitters in the beam." Never was there a finer group of objects. It raises a strong conception of the old man's joy and elation of heart, by displaying a scene, which produces in every spectator, a corresponding train of pleasing emotions; the declining sun looking forth in his brightness after a storm; the cheerful face of all nature; and the still life finely animated by the circumstance of the aged hero, with his staff and his gray locks;

a circumstance both extremely picturesque in itself, and peculiarly suited to the main object of the comparison. Such analogies and associations of ideas as these, are highly pleasing to the fancy. They give opportunity for introducing many a fine poetical picture. They diversify the scene; they aggrandize the subject; they keep the imagination awake and sprightly. For as the judgment is principally exercised in distinguishing objects, and remarking the differences among those which seem alike; so the highest amusement of the imagination is to trace likenesses and agreements among those which seem different.

The principal rules which respect poetical comparisons are, that they be introduced on proper occasions, when the mind is disposed to relish them; and not in the midst of some severe and agitating passion, which cannot admit this play of fancy; that they be founded on a resemblance neither too near and obvious so as to give little amusement to the imagination in tracing it, nor too faint and remote, so as to be apprehended with difficulty; that they serve either to illustrate the principal object, and to render the conception of it, more clear and distinct; or at least, to heighten and embellish it, by a suitable association of images*.

Every country has a scenery peculiar to itself; and the imagery of a good poet will exhibit it. For, as he copies after nature, his allusions will of course be taken from those objects which he sees around him, and which have often struck his fancy. For this reason, in order to judge of the propriety of poetical imagery, we ought to be, in some measure, acquainted with the natural history of the country where the scene of the poem is laid. The introduction of foreign images betrays a poet, copying not from nature, but from other writers. Hence so many Lions and

* See Elements of Criticism, vol. 3. ch. 19.

and Tygers, Eagles and Serpents, which we meet with in the families of modern poets; as if these animals had acquired some right to a place in poetical comparisons for ever, because employed by ancient authors. They employed them with propriety, as objects generally known in their country; but they are absurdly used for illustration by us, who know them only at second hand, or by description. To most readers of modern poetry, it were more to the purpose to describe Lions or Tygers by families taken from men, than to compare men to Lions. Ossian is very correct in this particular. His imagery is, without exception, copied from that face of nature, which he saw before his eyes; and by consequence may be expected to be lively. We meet with no Grecian or Italian scenery; but with the mists, and clouds, and storms, of a northern mountainous region.

No poet abounds more in families than Ossian. There are in this collection as many, at least, as in the whole *Iliad* and *Odyssey* of Homer. I am indeed inclined to think, that the works of both poets are too much crowded with them. Similes are sparkling ornaments; and like all things that sparkle, are apt to dazzle and tire us by their lustre. But if Ossian's similes be too frequent, they have this advantage of being commonly shorter than Homer's; they interrupt his narration less; he just glances aside to some resembling object, and instantly returns to his former track. Homer's similes include a wider range of objects. But in return, Ossian's are, without exception, taken from objects of dignity, which cannot be said for all those which Homer employs. The Sun, the Moon, and the Stars, Clouds and Meteors, Lightning and Thunder, Seas and Whales, Rivers, Torrents, Winds, Ice, Rain, Snow, Dews, Mist, Fire and Smoke, Trees and Forests, Heath and Grass and Flowers, Rocks and Mountains, Music
and

and Songs, Light and Darknefs, Spirits and Ghosts ; these form the circle, within which Ossian's comparisons generally run. Some, not many, are taken from Birds and Beasts ; as Eagles, Sea-Fowl, the Horse, the Deer, and the Mountain Bee ; and a very few from such operations of art as were then known. Homer has diversified his imagery by many more allusions to the animal world ; to Lions, Bulls, Goats, Herds of Cattle, Serpents, Insects ; and to the various occupations of rural and pastoral life. Ossian's defect in this article, is plainly owing to the desert, uncultivated state of his country, which suggested to him few images beyond natural inanimate objects, in their rudest form. The birds and animals of the country were probably not numerous ; and his acquaintance with them was slender, as they were little subjected to the uses of man.

The great objection made to Ossian's imagery, is its uniformity, and the too frequent repetition of the same comparisons. In a work so thick sown with similes, one could not but expect to find images of the same kind sometimes suggested to the poet by resembling objects ; especially to a poet like Ossian, who wrote from the immediate impulse of poetical enthusiasm, and without much preparation of study or labour. Fertile as Homer's imagination is acknowledged to be, who does not know how often his Lions and Bulls, and Flocks of Sheep, recur with little or no variation ; nay, sometimes in the very same words ? The objection made to Ossian is, however, founded in a great measure, upon a mistake. It has been supposed, by inattentive readers, that wherever the Moon, the Cloud, or the Thunder, returns in a simile, it is the same simile, and the same Moon, or Cloud, or Thunder, which they had met with a few pages before. Whereas very often the similes are widely different. The object, whence they are taken, is indeed in substance the same ; but
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the image is new; for the appearance of the object is changed; it is presented to the fancy in another attitude; and clothed with new circumstances, to make it suit the different illustration for which it is employed. In this lies Ossian's great art; in so happily varying the form of the few natural appearances with which he was acquainted, as to make them correspond to a great many different objects.

Let us take for one instance the Moon, which is very frequently introduced into his comparisons; as in northern climates, where the nights are long, the Moon is a greater object of attention, than in the climate of Homer; and let us view how much our poet has diversified its appearance. The shield of a warrior is like "the darkened moon when it moves
"a dun circle through the heavens." The face of a ghost, wan and pale, is like "the beam of the setting
"moon." And a different appearance of a ghost, thin and indistinct, is like "the new moon seen
"through the gathered mist, when the sky pours
"down its flaky snow, and the world is silent and
"dark; or in a different form still, it is like "the
"watery beam of the moon, when it rushes from
"between two clouds, and the midnight shower is
"on the field." A very opposite use is made of the moon in the description of Agandecca: "She came in
"all her beauty, like the moon from the cloud of
"the East." Hope, succeeded by disappointment, is "joy rising on her face, and sorrow returning a-
gain, like a thin cloud on the moon." But when Swaran, after his defeat, is cheered by Fingal's generosity, "His face brightened like the full moon of
"heaven, when the clouds vanish away, and leave
"her calm and broad in the midst of the sky." Ven-
vela is "bright as the moon when it trembles over
"the western wave;" but the soul of the guilty
"Uthal is "dark as the troubled face of the moon,
"when it foretels the storm." And by a very fan-
ciful

ful and uncommon allusion, it is said of Cormac, who was to die in his early years, "Nor long shalt thou lift the spear, mildly shining beam of youth! "Death stands dim behind thee, like the darkened half of the moon behind its growing light."

Another instance of the same nature may be taken from mist, which, as being a very familiar appearance in the country of Ossian, he applies to a variety of purposes, and pursues through a great many forms. Sometimes, which one would hardly expect, he employs it to heighten the appearance of a beautiful object. The hair of Morna is "like the mist of Cromla, when it curls on the rock, and shines to the beam of the west."—"The song comes with its music to melt and please the ear. It is like soft mist, that rising from a lake pours on the silent vale. The green flowers are filled with dew. The sun returns in its strength, and the mist is gone*." But, for the most part, mist is employed as a similitude of some disagreeable or terrible object. "The soul of Nathos was sad, like the sun in the day of mist, when his face is watery and dim." The "darkness of old age comes like the mist of the desert." The face of a ghost is "pale as the mist of Cromla." "The gloom of the battle is rolled along

* There is a remarkable propriety in this comparison. It is intended to explain the effect of soft and mournful music. Armin appears disturbed at a performance of this kind. Carmor says to him, "Why bursts the sigh of Armin? Is there a cause to mourn? The song comes with its music to melt and please the ear. It is like soft mist," &c. that is, such mournful songs have a happy effect to soften the heart, and to improve it by tender emotions, as the moisture of the mist refreshes and nourishes the flowers; whilst the sadness they occasion is only transient, and soon dispelled by the succeeding occupations and amusements of life: "The sun returns in its strength, and the mist is gone."

“along as mist that is poured on the valley, when
 “storms invade the silent sun-shine of heaven.”
 Fame suddenly departing, is likened to “mist that
 “flies away before the rustling wind of the vale.”
 A ghost, slowly vanishing, to “mist that melts
 “by degrees on the sunny hill.” Cairbar, after
 his treacherous assassination of Oscar, is compared
 to a pestilential fog. “I love a foe like Cath-
 “mor,” says Fingal, “his soul is great; his arm is
 “strong; his battles are full of fame. But the little
 “soul is like a vapour that hovers round the marshy
 “lake. It never rises on the green hill, lest the
 “winds meet it there. Its dwelling is in the cave;
 “and it sends forth the dart of death.” This is a
 simile highly finished. But there is another which is
 still more striking, founded also on mist, in the fourth
 book of Temora. Two factious chiefs are contend-
 ing; Cathmor the king interposes, rebukes and si-
 lences them. The poet intends to give us the high-
 est idea of Cathmor’s superiority; and most effectual-
 ly accomplishes his intention by the following hap-
 py image. “They sunk from the king on either
 “side; like two columns of morning mist, when the
 “sun rises between them on his glittering rocks. Dark
 “is their rolling on either side; each towards its
 “reedy pool.” These instances may sufficiently shew
 with what richness of imagination Ossian’s compa-
 risons abound, and, at the same time, with what
 propriety of judgment they are employed. If his
 field was narrow, it must be admitted to have been
 as well cultivated as its extent would allow.

As it is usual to judge of poets from a comparison
 of their families more than of other passages, it will
 perhaps be agreeable to the reader, to see how Homer
 and Ossian have conducted some images of the same
 kind. This might be shewn in many instances. For
 as the great objects of nature are common to the
 poets of all nations, and make the general store-
 house of all imagery, the ground-work of their com-
 parisons

parisons must of course be frequently the same. I shall select only a few of the most considerable from both poets. Mr. Pope's translation of Homer can be of no use to us here.

The parallel is altogether unfair between prose, and the imposing harmony of flowing numbers. It is only by viewing Homer in the simplicity of a prose translation, that we can form any comparison between the two bards.

The shock of two encountering armies, the noise and the tumult of battle, afford one of the most grand and awful subjects of description; on which all epic poets have exerted their strength. Let us first hear Homer. The following description is a favourite one, for we find it twice repeated in the same words *.

“ When now the conflicting hosts joined in the field
 “ of battle, then were mutually opposed shields, and
 “ swords, and the strength of armed men. The hos-
 “ sy bucklers were dashed against each other. The
 “ universal tumult rose. There were mingled the
 “ triumphant shouts and the dying groans of the vic-
 “ tors and the vanquished. The earth streamed with
 “ blood. As when winter torrents, rushing from the
 “ mountains, pour into a narrow valley, their violent
 “ waters. They issue from a thousand springs, and
 “ mix in the hallowed channel. The distant shep-
 “ herd hears on the mountain, their roar from afar.
 “ Such was the terror and the shout of the engaging
 “ armies.” In another passage, the poet, much in
 the manner of Ossian, heaps simile on simile, to ex-
 press the vastness of the idea, with which his imagina-
 tion seems to labour. “ With a mighty shout the
 “ hosts engage. Not so loud roars the wave of ocean,
 “ when driven against the shore by the whole force
 “ of the boisterous north; not so loud in the moun-
 “ tain, the noise of the flame, when rising in its fury
 “ to consume the forest; not so loud the wind among
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* Iliad iv. 446. and Iliad viii. 6c.

“ the lofty oaks, when the wrath of the storm rages ;
 “ as was the clamour of the Greeks and Trojans,
 “ when, roaring terrible, they rushed against each o-
 “ ther *.”

To these descriptions and similies, we may oppose the following from Ossian, and leave the reader to judge between them. He will find images of the same kind employed ; commonly less extended ; but thrown forth with a glowing rapidity which characterises our poet. “ As autumn’s dark storms pour
 “ from two echoing hills, towards each other, ap-
 “ proached the heroes. As two dark streams from
 “ high rocks meet, and mix, and roar on the plain ;
 “ loud, rough, and dark in battle, meet Lochlin
 “ and Inisfail. Chief mixed his strokes with chief,
 “ and man with man. Steel clanging, sounded on
 “ steel. Helmets are cleft on high ; blood bursts and
 “ smokes around. As the troubled noise of the
 “ ocean, when roll the waves on high ; as the last
 “ peal of the thunder of heaven, such is the noise of
 “ battle. As roll a thousand waves to the rock, so
 “ Swaran’s host came on ; as meets a rock a thou-
 “ sand waves, so Inisfail met Swaran. Death raises
 “ all his voices around, and mixes with the sound of
 “ shields. The field echoes from wing to wing, as
 “ a hundred hammers that rise by turns on the red
 “ son of the furnace. As a hundred winds on Mor-
 “ ven ; as the streams of a hundred hills ; as clouds
 “ fly successive over heaven ; or as the dark ocean
 “ assaults the shore of the desert ; so roaring, so vast,
 “ so terrible, the armies mixed on Lena’s echoing
 “ heath.” In several of these images, there is a remarkable similarity to Homer’s ; but what follows is superior to any comparison that Homer uses on this subject. “ The groan of the people spread over the
 “ hills ; it was like the thunder of night, when the
 “ cloud

* Iliad xiv. 393.

“cloud bursts on Cona; and a thousand ghosts
 “shriek at once on the hollow wind.” Never was
 an image of more awful sublimity employed to heighten the terror of battle.

Both poets compare the appearance of an army approaching, to the gathering of dark clouds. “As
 “when a shepherd,” says Homer, “beholds from
 “the rock a cloud borne along the sea by the western
 “wind; black as pitch it appears from afar, sailing
 “over the ocean, and carrying the dreadful storm.
 “He shrinks at the sight, and drives his flock into
 “the cave: Such, under the Ajaces, moved on, the
 “dark, the thickened phalanx to the war*.”—
 “They came,” says Ossian, “over the desert like
 “stormy clouds, when the winds roll them over the
 “heath; their edges are tinged with lightning; and
 “the echoing groves foresee the storm.” The edges
 of the cloud tinged with lightning, is a sublime idea;
 but the shepherd and his flock, render Homer’s simile
 more picturesque. This is frequently the difference
 between the two poets. Ossian gives no more than
 the main image, strong and full. Homer adds cir-
 cumstances and appendages, which amuse the fancy
 by enlivening the scenery.

Homer compares the regular appearance of an army, to “clouds that are settled on the mountain top, in the day of calmness, when the strength of the
 “north wind sleeps †.” Ossian, with full as much propriety, compares the appearance of a disordered army, “to the mountain cloud, when the blast hath entered its womb; and scatters the curling gloom on
 “every side.” Ossian’s clouds assume a great many forms; and, as we might expect from his climate, are a fertile source of imagery to him. “The war-
 “rior’s followed their chiefs, like the gathering of the
 “rainy clouds, behind the red meteors of heaven.”

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* Iliad iv. 275.

† Iliad. v. 522.

An army retreating without coming to action, is likened to "clouds, that having long threatened rain, retire slowly behind the hills." The picture of Oithona, after she had determined to die, is lively and delicate. "Her soul was resolved, and the tear was dried from her wildly-looking eye. A troubled joy rose on her mind, like the red path of the lightning on a stormy cloud." The image also of the gloomy Cairbar, meditating, in silence, the assassination of Oscar, until the moment came when his designs were ripe for execution, is extremely noble, and complete in all its parts. "Cairbar heard their words in silence, like the cloud of a shower; it stands dark on Cromla, till the lightning bursts its side. The valley gleams with red light; the spirits of the storm rejoice. So stood the silent king of Temora; at length his words are heard."

Homer's comparison of Achilles to the Dog-Star, is very sublime. "Priam beheld him rushing along the plain, shining in his armour like the star of autumn; bright are its beams, distinguished amidst the multitude of stars in the dark hour of night. It rises in its splendor; but its splendor is fatal; betokening to miserable men, the destroying heat†" The first appearance of Fingal is, in like manner, compared by Ossian, to a star or meteor. "Fingal, tall in his ship, stretched his bright lance before him. Terrible was the gleam of his steel; it was like the green meteor of death, setting in the heath of Malmor, when the traveller is alone, and the broad moon is darkened in heaven." The hero's appearance in Homer, is more magnificent; in Ossian, more terrible.

A tree cut down, or overthrown by a storm, is a similitude frequent among poets for describing the fall of a warrior in battle. Homer employs it often. But

* Iliad xxii. 26.

But the most beautiful by far of his comparisons founded on this object, indeed one of the most beautiful in the whole *Iliad*, is that on the death of Euphorbus. "As the young and verdant olive, which a man hath reared with care in a lonely field, where the springs of water bubble around it; it is fair and flourishing; it is fanned by the breath of all the winds, and loaded with white blossoms; when the sudden blast of a whirlwind descending, roots it out from its bed, and stretches it out on the dust*." To this, elegant as it is, we may oppose the following simile of Ossian's, relating to the death of the three sons of Ufnoth. "They fell, like three young oaks which stood alone on the hill. The traveller saw the lovely trees, and wondered how they grew so lonely. The blast of the desert came by night, and laid their green heads low. Next day he returned; but they were withered, and the heath was bare." Mulvina's allusion to the same object, in her lamentation over Oscar, is so exquisitely tender, that I cannot forbear giving it a place also. "I was a lovely tree in thy presence, Oscar! with all my branches round me. But thy death came, like a blast from the desert, and laid my green head low. The spring returned with its showers; but no leaf of mine arose." Several of Ossian's similes taken from trees, are remarkably beautiful, and diversified with well chosen circumstances; such as that upon the death of Ryno and Orla: "They have fallen like the oak of the desert; when it lies across a stream, and withers in the wind of the mountains:" Or that which Ossian applies to himself; "I, like an ancient oak in Morven, moulder alone in my place; the blast hath lopped my branches away; and I tremble at the wings of the north."

As Homer exalts his heroes by comparing them to gods, Ossian makes the same use of comparisons taken from spirits and ghosts. Swaran "roared in battle, like the shrill spirit of a storm that sits dim on the clouds of Gormal, and enjoys the death of the mariner." His people gathered around Erragon, "like storms around the ghost of night, when he calls them from the top of Morven, and prepares to pour them on the land of the stranger." "They fell before my son, like groves in the desert, when an angry ghost rushes through night, and takes their green heads in his hand." In such images, Ossian appears in his strength; for very seldom have supernatural beings been painted with so much sublimity, and such force of imagination, as by this poet. Even Homer, great as he is, must yield to him in similes formed upon these. Take, for instance, the following, which is the most remarkable of this kind in the *Iliad*. "Meriones followed Idomeneus to battle, like Mars the destroyer of men, when he rushes to war. Terror, his beloved son, strong and fierce, attends him; who fills with dismay, the most valiant hero. They come from Thrace, armed against the Ephyrians and Phlegyans; nor do they regard the prayers of either; but dispose of success at their will*." The idea here is undoubtedly noble: but observe what a figure Ossian sets before the astonished imagination, and with what sublimely terrible circumstances he has heightened it. "He rushed in the sound of his arms, like the dreadful spirit of Loda, when he comes in the roar of a thousand storms, and scatters battles from his eyes. He sits on a cloud over Lochlin's seas. His mighty hand is on his sword. The winds lift his flaming locks. So terrible was Cu-chullin in the day of his fame."

Homer's

Homer's comparisons relate chiefly to martial subjects, to the appearances and motions of armies, the engagement and death of heroes, and the various incidents of war. In Ossian, we find a greater variety of other subjects illustrated by similes; particularly, the songs of bards, the beauty of women, the different circumstances of old age, sorrow, and private distress; which give occasion to much beautiful imagery. What, for instance, can be more delicate and moving, than the following simile of Oithona's in her lamentation over the dishonour she had suffered? "Chief of Strumon," replied the sighing maid, "why didst thou come over the dark blue wave to Nuath's mournful daughter?—" "Why did not I pass away in secret, like the flower of the rock, that lifts its fair head unseen, and strews its withered leaves on the blast?" The music of bards, a favourite object with Ossian, is illustrated by a variety of the most beautiful appearances that are to be found in nature. It is compared to the calm shower of spring; to the dews of the morning on the hill of roes; to the face of the blue and still lake. Two similes on this subject I shall quote, because they would do honour to any of the most celebrated classics. The one is; "Sit thou on the heath, O bard! and let us hear thy voice; it is pleasant as the gale of the spring that sighs on the hunter's ear, when he awakens from dreams of joy, and has heard the music of the spirits of the hill." The other contains a short, but exquisitely tender image, accompanied with the finest poetical painting. "The music of Carril was like the memory of joys that are past, pleasant and mournful to the soul. The ghosts of departed bards heard it from Slimora's side. Soft sounds spread along the wood; and the silent valleys of night rejoice." What a figure would such imagery and such scenery have made, had they been presented to us adorned with

with the sweetness and harmony of the Virgilian numbers!

I have chosen all along to compare Ossian with Homer, rather than Virgil, for an obvious reason. There is a much nearer correspondence between the times and manners of the two former poets. Both wrote in an early period of society; both are originals; both are distinguished by simplicity, sublimity, and fire. The correct elegance of Virgil, his artful imitation of Homer, the Roman stateliness which he every where maintains, admit no parallel with the abrupt boldness, and enthusiastic warmth of the Celtic bard. In one article, indeed, there is a resemblance. Virgil is more tender than Homer; and thereby agrees more with Ossian, with this difference, that the feelings of the one are more gentle and polished, those of the other more strong; the tenderness of Virgil softens, that of Ossian dissolves and overcomes the heart.

A resemblance may be sometimes observed between Ossian's comparisons, and those employed by the sacred writers. They abound much in this figure, and they use it with the utmost propriety*. The imagery of Scripture exhibits a soil and climate altogether different from those of Ossian; a warmer country, a more smiling face of nature, the arts of agriculture and of rural life much farther advanced. The wine press, and the threshing floor, are often presented to us, the cedar and the palm-tree, the fragrance of perfumes, the voice of the turtle, and the beds of lilies. The similes are, like Ossian's, generally short, touching on one point of resemblance, rather than spread out into little episodes. In the following example may be perceived what inexpressible grandeur poetry receives from the intervention of the Deity. "The nations shall rush like the
"rushings of many waters; but God shall rebuke
"them,

* See Dr Lowth de Sacra Poesi Hebræorum.

“ them, and they shall fly far off, and shall be chased
 “ as the chaff of the mountains before the wind,
 “ and like the down of the thistle before the whirl-
 “ wind *.”

Besides formal comparisons, the poetry of Ossian is embellished with many beautiful metaphors: Such as that remarkably fine one applied to Deugala; “ She was covered with the light of beauty; but her heart was the house of pride.” This mode of expression, which suppresses the mark of comparison, and substitutes a figured description in room of the object described, is a great enlivener of style. It denotes that glow and rapidity of fancy, which, without pausing to form a regular simile, paints the object at one stroke. “ Thou art to me the beam of the east, rising in a land unknown.”—“ In peace, thou art the gale of spring; in war, the mountain storm.” “ Pleasant be thy rest, O lovely beam, soon hast thou set on our hills! The steps of thy departure were stately, like the moon on the blue trembling wave. But thou hast left us in darkness, first of the maids of Lutha! Soon hast thou set, Malvina! but thou risest, like the beam of the east, among the spirits of thy friends, where they sit in their stormy halls, the chambers of the thunder.” This is correct and finely supported. But in the following instance, the metaphor, though very beautiful at the beginning, becomes imperfect before it closes, by being improperly mixed with the literal sense. “ Trathal went forth with the stream of his people; but they met a rock; Fingal stood unmoved; broken they rolled back from his side. Nor did they roll in safety; the spear of the king pursued their flight.”

The hyperbole is a figure which we might expect to find often employed by Ossian; as the undisciplined

lined imagination of early ages generally prompts exaggeration, and carries its objects to excess; whereas longer experience, and farther progress in the arts of life, chasten mens ideas and expressions. Yet Ossian's hyperboles appear not to me, either so frequent or so harsh as might at first have been looked for; an advantage owing no doubt to the more cultivated state, in which, as was before shewn, poetry subsisted among the ancient Celtæ, than among most other barbarous nations. One of the most exaggerated descriptions in the whole work, is what meets us at the beginning of Fingal, where the scout makes his report to Cuchullin of the landing of the foe. But this is so far from deserving censure, that it merits praise, as being, on that occasion, natural and proper. The scout arrives, trembling and full of fears; and it is well known, that no passion disposes men to hyperbolise more than terror. It both annihilates themselves in their own apprehension, and magnifies every object which they view through the medium of a troubled imagination. Hence all those indistinct images of formidable greatness, the natural marks of a disturbed and confused mind, which occur in Moran's description of Swaran's appearance, and in his relation of the conference which they held together; not unlike the report which the affrighted Jewish spies made to their leader of the land of Canaan. "The land
 " through which we have gone to search it, is a land
 " that eateth up the inhabitants thereof; and all the
 " people that we saw in it were people of a great stature: and there saw we giants, the sons of Anak,
 " which come of the giants; and we were in our
 " own sight as grasshoppers, and so were we in their
 " sight*."

With regard to personifications, I formerly observed that Ossian was sparing, and I accounted for his

* Numbers xiii. 32. 33.

his being so. Allegorical personages he has none; and their absence is not to be regretted. For the intermixture of those shadowy beings, which have not the support even of mythological or legendary belief, with human actors, seldom produces a good effect. The fiction becomes too visible and phantastic; and overthrows that impression of reality, which the probable recital of human actions is calculated to make upon the mind. In the serious and pathetic scenes of Ossian especially, allegorical characters would have been as much out of place, as in Tragedy; serving only unseasonable to amuse the fancy, whilst they stopped the current, and weakened the force of passion.

With apostrophes, or addresses to persons absent or dead, which have been in all ages the language of passion, our poet abounds; and they are among his highest beauties. Witness the apostrophe, in the first book of Fingal, to the maid of Inistore, whose lover had fallen in battle; and that inimitably fine one of Cuchullin to Bragela at the conclusion of the same book. He commands the harp to be struck in her praise; and the mention of Bragela's name, immediately suggesting to him a crowd of tender ideas; "Dost thou raise thy fair face from the rocks," he exclaims, "to find the sails of Cuchullin? The sea
" is rolling far distant, and its white foam shall de-
" ceive thee for my sails." And now his imagina-
" tion being wrought up to conceive her as, at that
" moment, really in this situation, he becomes
" afraid of the harm she may receive from the incle-
" mency of the night; and with an enthusiasm, hap-
" py and affecting, though beyond the cautious
strain of modern poetry, "Retire," he proceeds,
" retire, for it is night, my love, and the dark winds
" sigh in thy hair. Retire to the hall of my feasts,
" and think of the times that are past; for I will
" not return till the storm of war has ceased. O
Connal,

“ Connal, speak of wars and arms, and send her
“ from my mind ; for lovely with her raven hair
“ is the white-bosomed daughter of Sorglan.” This
breathes all the native spirit of passion and tender-
ness.

The addresses to the sun, to the moon, and to the evening star, must draw the attention of every reader of taste, as among the most splendid ornaments of this collection. The beauties of each are too great, and too obvious to need any particular comment. In one passage only of the address to the moon, there appears some obscurity. “ Wither dost
“ thou retire from thy course, when the darkness of
“ thy countenance grows ? Hast thou thy hall like
“ Ossian ? Dwellest thou in the shadow of grief ?
“ Have thy sisters fallen from heaven ? Are they
“ who rejoiced with thee at night, no more ? Yes,
“ they have fallen, fair light ! and thou dost often
“ retire to mourn. We may be at a loss to comprehend, at first view, the ground of these speculations of Ossian, concerning the moon ; but when all the circumstances are attended to, they will appear to flow naturally from the present situation of his mind. A mind under the dominion of any strong passion, tinctures with its own disposition, every object which it beholds. The old bard, with his heart bleeding for the loss of all his friends, is meditating on the different phases of the moon. Her waning and darkness presents to his melancholy imagination, the image of sorrow ; and presently the idea arises, and is indulged, that, like himself, she retires to mourn over the loss of other moons, or of stars, whom he calls her sisters, and fancies to have once rejoiced with her at night, now fallen from heaven. Darkness suggested the idea of mourning, and mourning suggested nothing so naturally to Ossian, as the death of beloved friends. An instance precisely similar of this influence of passion, may be seen in a pas-
sage

sage which has always been admired of Shakespeare's King Lear. The old man on the point of distraction, through the inhumanity of his daughters, sees Edgar appear disguised like a beggar and a madman.

Lear. Didst thou give all to thy daughters? And art thou come to this?

Couldst thou leave nothing? Didst thou give them all?

Kent. He hath no daughters, Sir.

Lear. Death, traitor! nothing could have subdued nature,

To such a lowness, but his unkind daughters.

King Lear, Act. 3. Scene 5.

The apostrophe to the winds, in the opening of *Darthula*, is in the highest spirit of poetry. "But the winds deceive thee, O *Darthula*: and deny the woody *Etha* to thy sails. These are not thy mountains, *Nathos*; nor is that the roar of thy climbing waves. The halls of *Cairbar* are near, and the towers of the foe lift their head. Where have ye been, ye southern winds; when the sons of my love were deceived? But ye have been sporting on plains, and pursuing the thistle's beard. O that ye had been rustling in the sails of *Nathos*, till the hills of *Etha* rose! till they rose in their clouds, and saw their coming chief." This passage is remarkable for the resemblance it bears to an exhortation with the wood nymphs, on their absence at a critical time; which, as a favourite poetical idea, *Virgil* has copied from *Theocritus*, and *Milton* has very happily imitated from both.

Where were ye, nymphs! when the remorseless deep
Clos'd o'er the head of your lov'd *Lycidas*?

For neither were ye playing on the steep

Where your old bards, the famous *Druids*, lie;

Nor on the shaggy top of *Mona*, high,

Nor yet where *Deva* spreads her wizard stream †.

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A a

Having

† *Milton's Lycidas.*

See *Theocrit. Idyll. I.*

Having now treated fully of Ossian's talents, with respect to description and imagery, it only remains to make some observations on his sentiments. No sentiments can be beautiful without being proper; that is, suited to the character and situation of those who utter them. In this respect Ossian is as correct as most writers. His characters, as above observed, are in general well supported; which could not have been the case, had the sentiments been unnatural or out of place. A variety of personages of different ages, sexes, and conditions, are introduced into his poems; and they speak and act with a propriety of sentiment and behaviour, which it is surprising to find in so rude an age. Let the poem of Darthula, throughout, be taken as an example.

But it is not enough that sentiments be natural and proper. In order to acquire any high degree of poetical merit, they must also be sublime and pathetic.

The sublime is not confined to sentiment alone. It belongs to description also; and whether in description or in sentiment, imports such ideas presented to the mind, as raise it to an uncommon degree of elevation, and fill it with admiration and astonishment. This is the highest effect either of eloquence or poetry: And to produce this effect, requires a genius glowing with the strongest and warmest conception of some object awful, great, or magnificent. That this character of genius belongs to Ossian, may, I think, sufficiently appear, from many of the passages I have already had occasion to quote. To produce more instances, were superfluous. If the engagement of Fingal with the spirit of Loda, in Caric-thura; if the encounters of the armies, in Fingal; if the address to the sun, in Carthon; if the similes founded upon ghosts and spirits of the night all formerly mentioned, be not admitted as examples, and illustrious ones too, of the true poetical sublime,

I confess myself entirely ignorant of this quality in writing.

All the circumstances indeed of Ossian's composition, are favourable to the sublime, more perhaps than to any other species of beauty. Accuracy and correctness; artfully connected narration; exact method and proportion of parts, we may look for in polished times. The gay and the beautiful will appear to more advantage in the midst of smiling scenery and pleasurable themes. But amidst the rude scenes of nature, amidst rocks and torrents, and whirlwinds and battles, dwells the sublime. It is the thunder and the lightning of genius. It is the offspring of nature not of art. It is negligent of all the lesser graces, and perfectly consistent with a certain noble disorder. It associates naturally with that grave and solemn spirit which distinguishes our author. For the sublime, is an awful and serious emotion; and is heightened by all the images of Trouble, and Terror, and Darkness.

*Ipse pater, media nimborum in nocte, corusca
Fulmina molitur dextra; quo maxima motu
Terra tremit; fugere feræ; & mortalia corda
Per gentes, humilis stravit pavor; ille, flagranti
Aut Atho, aut Rhodopen, aut alta Ceraunia telo
Dejicit. ———* VIRG. GEORG. I.

Simplicity and conciseness, are never-failing characteristics of the style of a sublime writer: He rests on the majesty of his sentiments, not on the pomp of his expressions. The main secret of being sublime, is to say great things in few and in plain words: For every superfluous decoration degrades a sublime idea. The mind rises and swells, when a lofty description or sentiment is presented to it, in its native form. But no sooner does the poet attempt to spread out this sentiment or description, and to deck it round and round with glittering ornaments than the mind begins to fall from its high elevation

elevation; the transport is over; the beautiful may remain, but the sublime is gone. Hence the concise and simple style of Ossian, gives great advantage to his sublime conceptions; and assists them in seizing the imagination with full power*.

Sublimity, as belonging to sentiment, coincides in a great measure with magnanimity, heroism, and generosity of sentiment. Whatever discovers human nature in its greatest elevation; whatever bespeaks a high effort of soul; or shews a mind superior to pleasures, to dangers, and to death, forms what may be called the moral or sentimental sublime. For this, Ossian is eminently distinguished. No poet maintains a higher tone of virtuous and noble sentiment, throughout all his works. Particularly in all the sentiments of Fingal, there is a grandeur and loftiness proper to swell the mind with the highest ideas of human perfection. Wherever he appears, we behold

* The noted saying of Julius Cæsar, to the pilot in a storm: "*Quid times? Cæsarum vehis;*" is maganimous and sublime. Lucan, not satisfied with this simple conciseness, resolved to amplify and improve the thought. Observe, how every time he twists it round, it departs farther from the sublime, till, at last, it ends in tumid declamation.

Sperne minas, inquit, Pelagi, ventoque furenti
Trade sinum. Italiam, si coelo auctore, recusas,
Me, pete. Sola tibi causa hæc est iusta timoris
Vectorem non nosse tuum; quem numina nunquam
Destituunt; de quo male tunc fortuna meretur,
Cum post vota venit; medias perrumpit procellas
Tutela secure mea. Coeli iste fretique,
Non puppis nostræ, labor est. Hanc Cæsare pressam
A fluctu defendit onus.

—Quid tanta strage paratur,
Ignoras? Quærit pelagi cælique tumultu
Quid præset fortuna mihi.

hold the hero. The objects which he pursues, are always truly great; to bend the proud; to protect the injured; to defend his friends; to overcome his enemies by generosity more than by force. A portion of the same spirit actuates all the other heroes. Valour reigns; but it is a generous valour, void of cruelty, animated by honour, not by hatred. We behold no debasing passions among Fingal's warrior's; no spirit of avarice or of insult; but a perpetual contention for fame; a desire of being distinguished and remembered for gallant actions; a love of justice; and a zealous attachment to their friends and their country. Such is the strain of sentiment in the works of Ossian.

But the sublimity of moral sentiments, if they wanted the softening of the tender, would be in hazard of giving a hard and stiff air to poetry. It is not enough to admire. Admiration is a cold feeling, in comparison of that deep interest, which the heart takes in tender and pathetic scenes; where, by a mysterious attachment to the objects of compassion, we are pleased and delighted, even whilst we mourn. With scenes of this kind, Ossian abounds; and his high merit in these, is incontestible. He may be blamed for drawing tears too often from our eyes; but that he has the power of commanding them, I believe no man, who has the least sensibility, will question. The general character of his poetry, is the heroic, mixed with the elegiac strain; admiration, tempered with pity. Ever fond of giving, as he expresses it, "the joy of grief," it is visible, that on all moving subjects, he delights to exert his genius; and accordingly, never were there finer pathetic situations, than what his works present. His great art in managing them, lies in giving vent to the simple and natural emotions of the heart. We meet with no exaggerated declamation; no subtle refinements on sorrow; no substitution of description in place of

passion. Ossian felt strongly himself; and the heart, when uttering its native language, never fails, by powerful sympathy, to affect the heart. A great variety of examples might be produced. We need only open the book to find them every where. What, for instance, can be more moving, than the lamentations of Oithona? after her misfortune? Gaul, the son of Morni, her lover, ignorant of what she had suffered comes to her rescue. Their meeting is tender in the highest degree. He proposes to engage her foe, in single combat, and gives her in charge what she is to do, if he himself shall fall. “And shall the daughter of Nuäth live? she replied with a bursting sigh. Shall I live in Tromathon and the son of Morni low? My heart is not of that rock; nor my soul careless as that sea, which lifts its blue waves to every wind, and rolls beneath the storm. The blast, which shall lay thee low, shall spread the branches of Oithona on earth. We shall wither together, son of carborne Morni! The narrow house is pleasant to me; and the gray stone of the dead; for never more will I leave thy rocks, sea-surrounded Tromathon! Chief of Strumon, why camest thou over the waves to Nuäth’s mournful daughter? Why did not I pass away in secret like the flower of the rock, that lifts its fair head unseen, and strews its withered leaves on the blast! Why didst thou come, O Gaul! to hear my departing sigh? O had I dwelt at Duvranna, in the bright beams of my fame! Then had my years come on with joy; and the virgins would bless my steps. But I fall in youth, son of Morni, and my father shall blush in his hall?”

Oithona mourns like a woman; in Cuchullin’s expressions of grief, after his defeat, we behold the sentiments of a hero, generous but desponding. The situation is remarkably fine. Cuchullin, roused from his cave by the noise of battle, sees Fingal victorious in the field. He is described as kindling at the sight.

“His

" His hand is on the sword of his fathers ; his red-
 " rolling eyes on the foe. He thrice attempted to
 " rush to battle ; and thrice did Connal stop him ;"
 suggesting that Fingal was routing the foe ; and that
 he ought not, by the show of superfluous aid, to de-
 prive the king of any part of the honour of a victory,
 which was owing to him alone. Cuchullin yields to
 this generous sentiment ; but we see it stinging him
 to the heart with the sense of his own disgrace.
 " Then, Carril, go, replied the chief, and greet the
 " king of Morven. When Lochlin falls away like
 " a stream after rain, and the noise of the battle is
 " over, then be thy voice sweet in his ear, to praise
 " the king of swords. Give him the sword of Caith-
 " bat ; for Cuchullin is worthy no more to lift the
 " arms of his fathers. But, O ye ghosts of the lone-
 " ly Cromla ! Ye souls of chiefs that are no more !
 " Be ye the companions of Cuchullin, and talk to
 " him in the cave of his sorrow. For never more
 " shall I be renowned among the mighty in the land.
 " I am like a beam that has thone : Like a mist that
 " has fled away ; when the blast of the morning
 " came, and brightened the shaggy side of the hill.
 " Connal ! talk of arms no more : Departed is my
 " fame. My sighs shall be on Cromla's wind ; till
 " my footsteps cease to be seen. And thou, white-bo-
 " somed Bragela ! mourn over the fall of my fame ;
 " for vanquished, I will never return to thee, thou
 " sun-beam of Dunscach !"

Æstuat Ingens

Uno in corde pudor, luctusque, et conscia virtus.

Besides such extended pathetic scenes, Ossian fre-
 quently pierces the heart by a single unexpected
 stroke. When Oscar fell in battle, " No father
 " mourned his son slain in youth ; no brother, his
 " brother of love ; they fell without tears, for the
 " chief of the people was low." In the admirable
 interview of Hector with Andromache, in the sixth
 Iliad,

Iliad, the circumstance of the child in his nurse's arms, has often been remarked, as adding much to the tenderness of the scene. In the following passage relating to the death of Cuchullin, we find a circumstance that must strike the imagination with still greater force. "And is the son of Semo fallen? said Carril with a sigh. Mournful are Tara's walls, and sorrow dwells at Dunscaich. Thy spouse is left alone in her youth; the son of thy love is alone. He shall come to Bragela, and ask her why she weeps? He shall lift his eyes to the wall, and see his father's sword. Whose sword is that? he will say; and the soul of his mother is sad." Soon after Fingal had shewn all the grief of a father's heart for Ryno, one of his sons, fallen in battle, he is calling, after his accustomed manner, his sons to the chase. "Call," says he, "Fillan and Ryno—But he is not here—My son rests on the bed of death." This unexpected start of anguish is worthy of the highest tragic poet,

If she come in, she'll sure speak to my wife —

My wife! — my wife — What wife? — I have no wife —

Oh insupportable! Oh heavy hour!

Othello, Act 5. Scene 7.

The contrivance of the incident in both poets is similar; but the circumstances are varied with judgment. Othello dwells upon the name of wife, when it had fallen from him, with the confusion and horror of one tortured with guilt. Fingal, with the dignity of a hero, corrects himself, and suppresses his rising grief.

The contrast which Ossian frequently makes between his present and his former state, diffuses over his whole poetry, a solemn pathetic air, which cannot fail to make impression on every heart. The conclusion of the songs of Selma, is particularly calculated for this purpose. Nothing can be more poetical and tender, or can leave upon the mind a stronger and more affecting idea of the venerable aged bard.

"Such

“ Such were the words of the bards in the days of
 “ the song; when the king heard the music of harps,
 “ and the tales of other times. The chiefs gathered
 “ from all their hills, and heard the lovely sound.
 “ They praised the voice of Cona*; the first among
 “ a thousand bards. But age is now on my tongue,
 “ and my soul has failed. I hear, sometimes, the
 “ ghosts of bards, and learn their pleasant song. But
 “ memory fails on my mind; I hear the call of
 “ years. They say, as they pass along; Why does
 “ Ossian sing? Soon shall he lie in the narrow house,
 “ and no bard shall raise his fame. Roll on, ye dark
 “ brown years! for ye bring no joy in your course.
 “ Let the tomb open to Ossian, for his strength has
 “ failed. The sons of the song are gone to rest. My
 “ voice remains like a blast, that roars lonely on a
 “ sea-surrounded rock, after the winds are laid. The
 “ dark moss whistles there, and the distant mariner
 “ sees the waving trees.”

Upon the whole; if to feel strongly, and to describe
 naturally, be the two chief ingredients in poetical ge-
 nius, Ossian must, after fair examination, be held to
 possess that genius in a high degree. The question is
 not, whether a few improprieties may be pointed out
 in his works; whether this, or that passage, might
 not have been worked up with more art and skill, by
 some writer of happier times? A thousand such cold
 and frivolous criticisms, are altogether indecisive as
 to his genuine merit. But, has he the spirit, the
 fire, the inspiration of a poet? Does he utter the
 voice of nature? Does he elevate by his sentiments?
 Does he interest by his descriptions? Does he paint
 to the heart as well as to the fancy, Does he make
 his readers glow, and tremble, and weep? These
 are the great characteristics of true poetry. Where
 these are found, he must be a minute critic indeed,
 who can dwell upon slight defects. A few beauties
 of

* Ossian himself is poetically called the voice of Cona.

of this high kind, transcend whole volumes of faultless mediocrity. Uncouth and abrupt, Ossian may sometimes appear by reason of his conciseness. But he is sublime, he is pathetic, in an eminent degree. If he has not the extensive knowledge, the regular dignity of narration, the fulness and accuracy of description, which we find in Homer and Virgil, yet in strength of imagination, in grandeur of sentiment, in native majesty of passion, he is fully their equal. If he flows not always like a clear stream, yet he breaks forth often like a torrent of fire. Of art too, he is far from being destitute; and his imagination is remarkable for delicacy as well as strength. Seldom or never is he either trifling or tedious; and if he be thought too melancholy, yet he is always moral. Tho' his merit were in other respects much less than it is, this alone ought to entitle him to high regard, that his writings are remarkably favourable to virtue. They awake the tenderest sympathies, and inspire the most generous emotions. No reader can rise from him, without being warmed with the sentiments of humanity, virtue, and honour.

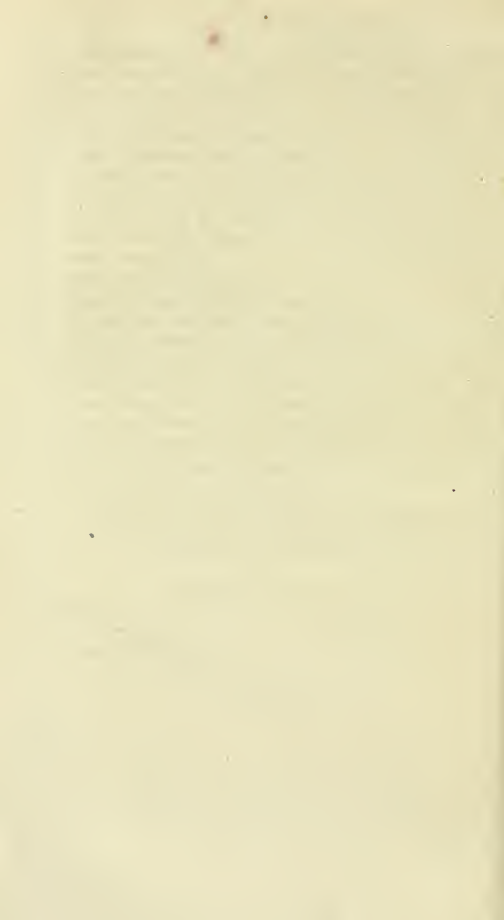
Though unacquainted with the original language, there is no one but must judge the translation to deserve the highest praise on account of its beauty and elegance.

Of its faithfulness and accuracy, I have been assured by persons skilled in the Galic tongue, who, from their youth, were acquainted with many of these poems of Ossian. To transfuse such spirited and fervid ideas from one language into another; to translate literally, and yet with such a glow of poetry; to keep alive so much passion, and support so much dignity throughout, is one of the most difficult works of genius, and proves the translator to have been animated with no small portion of Ossian's spirit.

The measured prose which he has employed, possesses considerable advantages above any sort of versification.

fication he could have chosen. Whilst it pleases and fills the ear with a variety of harmonious cadences, being, at the same time, freer from constraint in the choice and arrangement of words, it allows the spirit of the original to be exhibited with more justness, force, and simplicity. Elegant, however, and masterly as Mr. Macpherson's translation is, we must never forget, whilst we read it, that we are putting the merit of the original to a severe test. For, we are examining a poet stripped of his native dress: divested of the harmony of his own numbers. We know how much grace and energy the works of the Greek and Latin poets receive from the charm of versification in their original languages. If, then, destitute of this advantage, exhibited in a literal version, Ossian still has power to please as a poet; and not to please only, but often to command, to transport, to melt the heart; we may very safely infer, that his productions are the offspring of true and uncommon genius; and we may boldly assign him a place among those whose works are to last for ages.

CRITICAL



CRITICAL OBSERVATIONS
ON THE
POEMS OF OSSIAN.

VOL. II.

B b

CRITICAL OBSERVATIONS

ON THE

POEMS OF OSSIAN.

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IN addition to the dissertations already given, which are usually found accompanying the Poems of Ossian, it is presumed that it will not be unacceptable to the reader, to see what another celebrated Philosopher and Critic has said on the subject. He has put the matter in a different light from those who have written before him, and his criticisms and remarks will be found to be original, judicious, and highly pleasing; as a proof of this, the following extracts are given :

“ From a thousand circumstances, it appears, that the works of Ossian are not a late production. They are composed in an old dialect of the Celtic tongue; and as, till lately, they were known only in the Highlands of Scotland, the author must have been a Caledonian. The translator* saw, in the isle of Sky, the first four books of the poem Fingal, written in a fair hand on vellum, and bearing date in the year 1403. The natives believe that poem to be very ancient: every person has passages of it by heart, transmitted by memory from their forefathers. Their dogs bear commonly the name of *Luath*, *Bran*, &c.

B 3

mentioned

* Mr. Macpherson.

mentioned in these poems, as our dogs do of *Pompey* and *Cæsar**. Many other particulars might be mentioned; but these are sufficient to prove that the work must have existed at least three or four centuries. Taking that for granted, I proceed to certain considerations tending to evince, that the manners described in *Ossian* were Caledonian manners, and not a pure fiction. And, after perusing with attention these considerations, I am not afraid that even the most incredulous will continue altogether unshaken.

It is a noted and well-founded observation, That manners are never painted to the life by any one to whom they are not familiar. It is not difficult to draw the outlines of imaginary manners; but to fill up the picture with all the variety of tints that manners assume in different circumstances, uniting all concordantly in one whole—*hic labor, hoc opus est*. Yet the manners here supposed to be invented, are delineated in a variety of incidents, of sentiments, of images, and of allusions, making one entire picture, without once deviating into the slightest incongruity. Every scene in *Ossian* relates to hunting, to fighting, or to love, the sole occupations of men in the original state of society: there is not a single image, simile, or allusion, but what is borrowed from that state, without a jarring circumstance.—Supposing all to be mere invention, is it not amazing to find no mention of Highland Clans, or of any name now in use? Is it not still more amazing, that there is not the slightest hint of the Christian religion, not even in a metaphor or allusion? Is it not equally

* In the isle of Sky, the ruins of the castle of Dun-scaich, upon abrupt rock hanging over the sea, are still visible. That castle, as vouched by tradition, belonged to Cuchullin Lord of that Isle, whose history is recorded in the Poem of *Pingal*. Upon the green, before the castle, there is a great stone, to which, according to the same tradition, his dog Luath was chained.

equally amazing, that, in a work where deer's flesh is frequently mentioned, and a curious method of roasting it, there should not be a word of fish as food, so common in later times? Very few Highlanders know that their fore fathers did not eat fish; and supposing it to be known, it would require singular attention, never to let a hint of it enter the poem. Can it be supposed, that a modern writer could be so constantly on his guard, as never to mention corn nor cattle? In a story so scanty of poetical images, the sedentary life of a shepherd, and the industry of a husbandman would make a capital figure: the cloven foot would somewhere peep out. And yet, in all the works of Ossian, there is no mention of agriculture; and but a slight hint of a herd of cattle in one or two allusions. I willingly give all advantages to the unbeliever: Supposing the author of Ossian to be a late writer, adorned with every refinement of modern education; yet, even upon that supposition, he is a miracle, far from being equalled by any other author ancient or modern.

But difficulties multiply when it is taken into the account, that the poems of Ossian have existed three or four centuries at least. Our Highlanders at present are rude and illiterate; and were in fact little better than savages at the period mentioned. Now, to hold the manners described in that work to be imaginary, is in effect to hold that they were invented by a Highland savage, acquainted with the rude manners of his country, but utterly unacquainted with every other system of manners. The manners of different countries are now so well known as to make it an easy task to invent manners by blending the manners of one country with those of another; but to invent manners of which the author has no example, and yet neither whimsical nor absurd, but congruous to human nature in its most polished state, I pronounce to be far above the powers of man. Is it

so much as supposable, that such a work could be the production of a Tartar or of a Hottentot? From what source then did Ossian draw the refined manners so deliciously painted by him? Supposing him to have been a traveller, of which we have not the slightest hint, the manners of France at that period, of Italy, and of other neighbouring nations, were little less barbarous than those of his own country. I can discover no source but inspiration. In a word, whoever seriously believes the manners of Ossian to be fictitious, may well say, with the religious enthusiast, "*Credo quia impossibile est*: I believe it because it is impossible."

But farther: The uncommon talents of the author of this work will cheerfully be acknowledged by every reader of taste: he certainly was a great master in his way. Now, whether the work be late, or composed four centuries ago, a man of such talents inventing a historical fable, and laying the scene of action among the savages in the hunter-state, would naturally frame a system of manners, the best suited in his opinion to that state. What then could tempt him to adopt a system of manners, so opposite to any notion he could form of savage manners? The absurdity is so gross, that we are forced, however reluctantly, to believe, that these manners are not fictitious, but in reality the manners of his country, coloured perhaps, or a little heightened, according to the privilege of an epic poet. And once admitting that fact, there can be no hesitation in ascribing the work to Ossian, son of Fingal, whose name it bears: we have no better evidence for the authors of several Greek and Roman books. Upon the same evidence, we must believe, that Ossian lived in the reign of the Emperor Caracalla, of whom frequent mention is made under the designation of *Caracul the Great King*; at which period, the shepherd-state was scarce known in Caedonia, and husbandry not at all. Had he
lived

lived so late as the twelfth century, when there were flocks and herds in that country, and some sort of agriculture, a poet of genius, such as Ossian undoubtedly was, would have drawn from these his finest images.

The foregoing considerations, I am persuaded, would not fail to convert the most incredulous; were it not for a consequence extremely improbable, that a people, little better at present than savages, were in their primitive hunter-state highly refined; for such Ossian describes them. And yet it is no less improbable, that such manners should be invented by an illiterate Highland bard. Let a man chuse either side, the difficulty cannot be solved but by a sort of miracle. What shall we conclude upon the whole? for the mind cannot forever remain long in suspense. As dry reasoning has left us in a dilemma, taste perhaps and feeling may extricate us. May not the case be here as in real painting? A portrait drawn from fancy may resemble the human visage; but such peculiarity of countenance and expression as serves to distinguish a certain person from every other, is always wanting. Present a portrait to a man of taste, and he will be at no loss to say, whether it be copied from life, or be the product of fancy. If Ossian paint from fancy, the cloven foot will appear: but if his portraits be complete, so as to express every peculiarity of character, why should we doubt of their being copied from life? In that view, the reader, I am hopeful, will not think his time thrown away in examining some of Ossian's striking pictures. I perceive not another resource.

Love of fame is painted by Ossian as the ruling passion of his countrymen the Caledonians. Warriors are every where described, as esteeming it their chief happiness to be recorded in the songs of the bards: that feature is never wanting in any of Ossian's heroes. Take the following instances: "King
" of

“ of the roaring Strumon, said the rising joy of Fin-
 “ gal, do I behold thee in arms after thy strength has
 “ failed? Often hath Morni shone in battles, like
 “ the beam of the rising sun, when he disperses the
 “ storms of the hill, and brings peace to the glitter-
 “ ing fields. But why didst thou not rest in thine age?
 “ Thy renown is in the song: The people behold
 “ thee, and bless the departure of mighty Morni*.”
 “ Son of Fingal, he said, why burns the soul of
 “ Gaul? My heart beats high: my steps are disor-
 “ dered; and my hand trembles on my sword.
 “ When I look toward the foe, my soul lightens be-
 “ fore me, and I see their sleeping host. Tremble
 “ thus the souls of the valiant, in battles of the
 “ spear? How would the soul of Morni rise, if we
 “ should rush on the foe! Our renown would grow
 “ in the song, and our steps be stately in the eye of
 “ the brave.”

That a warrior has acquired his fame is a consol-
 ation in every distress: “ Carril,” said the king in se-
 cret, “ the strength of Cuchullin fails. My days
 “ are with the years that are past; and no morning
 “ of mine shall arise. They shall seek me at Temo-
 “ ra, but I shall not be found. Cormac will weep
 “ in his hall, and say, Where is Tura’s chief? But
 “ my name is renowned, my fame in the song of
 “ bards. The youth will say, O let me die as Cu-
 “ chullin died: renown clothed him like a robe; and
 “ the light of his fame is great. Draw the arrow
 “ from my side; and lay Cuchullin below that oak.
 “ Place the shield of Caithbat near, that they may
 “ behold me amid the arms of my fathers †.” Fin-
 gal speaks: “ Ullin, my aged bard, take the ship of
 “ the king. Carry Oscar to Selma, and let the
 “ daughters of Morven weep. We shall fight in
 “ Erin for the race of fallen Cormac. The days of
 “ my

* Lathmon.

† The death of Cuthullin.

“ my years begin to fail : I feel the weakness of my
 “ arm. My fathers bend from their clouds to re-
 “ ceive their gray-hair’d son. But, Trenmore ! be-
 “ fore I go hence, one beam of my fame shall rise :
 “ in fame shall my days end, as my years begun : my
 “ life shall be one stream of light to other times *.”

Ossian speaks : “ Did thy beauty last, O Ryno !
 “ stood the strength of car-borne Oscar † ! Fingal
 “ himself passed away, and the halls of his fathers
 “ forgot his steps. And shalt thou remain, aged
 “ bard, when the mighty have failed ? But my
 “ fame shall remain ; and grow like the oak of Mor-
 “ ven, which lifts its broad head to the storm, and
 “ rejoiceth in the course of the wind ‡.

The chief cause of affliction when a young man is
 cut off in battle, is his not having received his fame :
 “ And fell the swiftest in the race, said the king, the
 “ first to bend the bow ? Thou scarce hast been
 “ known to me ; why did young Ryno fall ! But sleep
 “ thou softly on Lena, Fingal shall soon behold thee.
 “ Soon shall my voice be heard no more, and my
 “ footsteps cease to be seen. The bards will tell of
 “ Fingal’s name ; the stones will talk of me. But,
 “ Ryno ! thou art low indeed, thou hast not received
 “ thy fame. Ullin, strike the harp for Ryno ; tell
 “ what the chief would have been. Farewel thou
 “ first in every field. No more shall I direct thy
 “ dart. Thou that hast been so fair ; I behold thee
 “ not.—Farewel ||.” “ Calthion rushed into the
 “ stream : I bounded forward on my spear : Teutha’s
 “ race fell before us : night came rolling down. Dun-
 “ thalmo rested on a rock, amidst an aged wood :
 “ the

* Temora.

† Several of Ossian’s heroes are described as fighting
 in cars. The Britons, in general, fought in that man-
 ner : “ The Britons fight, not only with cavalry, or foot,
 “ but also with cars and chariots.” Pomp. Mela.

‡ Berrathon.

|| Fingal.

“ the rage of his bosom burned against the car-borne
 “ Calthou. But Calthou stood in his grief; he
 “ mourned the fallen Colmar; Colmar slain in youth,
 “ before his fame arose*.”

Lamentation for loss of fame. Cuchullin speaks:
 “ But O ye ghosts of the lonely Crómia! ye souls of
 “ chiefs that are no more! be ye the companions of
 “ Cuchullin, and talk to him in the cave of his sor-
 “ row. For never more shall I be renowned among
 “ the mighty in the land. I am like a beam that
 “ has shone; like a mist that fled away when the
 “ blast of the morning came, and brightened the
 “ shaggy side of the hill. Connal, talk of arms no
 “ more; departed is my fame. My sighs shall be
 “ on Cromla’s wind, till my footsteps cease to be
 “ seen. And thou, white-bosomed Bragela, mourn
 “ over the fall of my fame; for, vanquished, never will
 “ I return to thee, thou sun-beam of Dunscaich †.”

Love of fame begets heroic actions, which go
 hand in hand with elevated sentiments: of the for-
 mer there are examples in every page; of the latter
 take the following examples: “ And let him come,
 “ replied the king. I love a foe like Cathmor: his
 “ soul is great; his arm his strong; and his battles
 “ full of fame. But the little soul is like a vapour
 “ that hovers round the marshy lake, which never
 “ rises on the green hill, lest the winds meet it
 “ there ‡.” Ossian speaks: “ But let us fly, son of
 “ Morni, Lathmon descends the hill. Then let our
 “ steps be slow, replied the fair-hair’d Gaul, lest the
 “ foe say with a smile, Behold the warrior’s of night:
 “ they are like ghosts, terrible in darkness; but they
 “ melt away before the beam of the East ||.” Son of
 “ the feeble hand, said Lathmon, shall my host de-
 “ scend! They are but two, and shall a thousand
 “ lift

* Calthou and Colmar. † Fingal. ‡ Lathmon.
 || Lathmon.

“ lift their steel! Noah would mourn in his hall for
 “ the departure of Lathmon’s fame: his eyes would
 “ turn from Lathmon, when the tread of his feet ap-
 “ proached. Go thou to the heroes, son of Dutha,
 “ for I behold the stately steps of Ossian. His fame
 “ his worthy of my steel: let him fight with Lath-
 “ mon*.” Fingal does not delight in battle, though
 “ his arm is strong. My renown grows on the fall
 “ of the haughty: the lightning of my steel pours on
 “ the proud in arms. The battle comes; and the
 “ tombs of the valiant rise; the tombs of my people
 “ rise, O my fathers! and I at last must remain alone.
 “ But I will remain renowned, and the departure of
 “ my soul shall be one stream of light †.” “ I raised
 “ my voice for Fovar-gormo, when they laid the
 “ chief in earth.” “ The aged Crothar was there,
 “ but his sigh was not heard. He searched for the
 “ wound of his son, and found it in his breast: joy
 “ arose in the face of the aged: he came and spoke
 “ to Ossian: King of spears, my son hath not fallen
 “ without his fame: the young warrior did not fly,
 “ but met death as he went forward in his strength.
 “ Happy are they who die in youth, when their re-
 “ nown is heard: their memory shall be honoured
 “ in the song; the young tear of the virgin falls ‡.”
 “ Cuchullin kindled at the sight, and darkness ga-
 “ thered on his brow. His hand was on the sword
 “ of his fathers: his red-rolling eye on the foe. He
 “ thrice attempted to rush to battle, and thrice did
 “ Connal stop. Chief of the isle of mist, he said
 “ Fingal subdues the foe; seek not a part of the fame
 “ of the king§.”

The pictures that Ossian draws of his country-
 men, are no less remarkable for tender sentiments
 than for elevation. Parental affection is finely couch-
 ed in the following passage: “ Son of Comhal, re-
 “ plied

* Lathmon. † Lathmon ‡ Croma. § Fingal.

“ plied the chief, the strength of Morni’s arm has
 “ failed. I attempt to draw the sword of my youth,
 “ but it remains in its place: I throw the spear, but
 “ it falls short of the mark; and I feel the weight
 “ of my shield. We decay like the grass of the
 “ mountain, and our strength returns no more. I
 “ have a son, O Fingal! his soul has delighted in the
 “ actions of Morni’s youth; but his sword has not
 “ been lifted against the foe, neither has his fame
 “ begun. I come with him to battle, to direct his
 “ arm. His renown will be a sun to my soul, in
 “ the dark hour of my departure. O that the name
 “ of Morni were forgot among the people, O that
 “ the heroes would only say, Behold the father of
 “ Gaul*.

And no less finely touched is grief for the loss of
 children: “ We saw Oscar leaning on his shield: we
 “ saw his blood around. Silence darkened on the
 “ face of every hero: each turned his back and wept.
 “ The king strove to hide his tears. He bends his
 “ head over his son; and his words are mixed with
 “ sighs. And art thou fallen, Oscar, in the midst
 “ of thy course! the heart of the aged beats over
 “ thee. I see thy coming battles: I behold the bat-
 “ tles that ought to come, but they are cut off from
 “ thy fame. When shall joy dwell at Selma? when
 “ shall the song of grief cease on Morven? My son
 “ falls by degrees, Fingal will be the last of his race.
 “ The fame I have received shall pass away: my age
 “ shall be without friends. I shall sit like a grey
 “ cloud in my hall: nor shall I expect the return of
 “ a son with his sounding arms. Weep, ye heroes
 “ of Morven; never more will Oscar rise †.”

Crothar speaks: “ Son of Fingal! dost thou not
 “ behold the darkness of Crothar’s hall of snells?
 “ My soul was not dark at the feast, when my peo-
 “ ple

* Lathmon.

† Temora.

"ple lived. I rejoiced in the presence of strangers,
 "when my son shone in the hall. But Ossian, he is
 "a beam that is departed, and left no streak of light
 "behind. He is fallen, son of Fingal, in the battles
 "of his father.—Rothmar, the chief of grassy
 "Tromlo, heard that my eyes had failed; he heard
 "that my arms were fixed in the hall, and the pride
 "of his soul arose. He came towards Croma; my
 "people fell before him. I took my arms in the
 "hall; but what could fightless Crothar do? My
 "steps were unequal; my grief was great. I wished
 "for the days that were past, days wherein I fought,
 "and won in the field of blood. My son returned
 "from the chace, the fair-haired Fovar-gormo. He
 "had not lifted his sword in battle, for his arm was
 "young. But the soul of the youth was great; the
 "fire of valour burnt in his eyes. He saw the dis-
 "ordered steps of his father, and his sigh arose. King
 "of Croma, he said, is it because thou hast no son;
 "is it for the weakness of Fovar-gormo's arm that
 "thy sighs arise? I begin, my father, to feel the
 "strength of my arm; I have drawn the sword of
 "my youth; and I have bent the bow. Let me
 "meet this Rothmar with the youths of Croma:
 "let me meet him, O my father; for I feel my
 "burning soul. And thou shalt meet him, I said,
 "son of the fightless Crothar! But let others ad-
 "vance before thee, that I may hear the tread of thy
 "feet at thy return; for my eyes behold thee not,
 "fair-haired Fovar-gormo?—He went, he met
 "the foe; he fell. The foe advances towards Cro-
 "ma. He who slew my son is near, with all his
 "pointed spears*."

The following sentiments about the shortness of
 human life are pathetic: "Desolate is the dwelling
 "of Moina, silence in the house of her fathers. Raise

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C c

"the

* Croma.

“ the song of mourning over the strangers. One day
 “ we must fall; and they have only fallen before us.
 “ Why dost thou build the hall, son of the winged
 “ days: Thou lookest from thy towers to day: soon
 “ will the blast of the desert come. It howls in thy
 “ empty court, and whistles over thy half-worn
 “ shield*.” “ How long shall we weep on Lena, or
 “ pour tears on Ullin! The mighty will not return:
 “ nor Oscar rise in his strength: The valiant must
 “ fall one day, and be no more known. Where are
 “ our fathers, O warriors, the chiefs of the times of
 “ old! They are set, like stars that have shone: we
 “ only hear the sound of their praise. But they were
 “ renowned in their day, and the terror of other
 “ times. Thus shall we pass, O warriors, in the
 “ day of our fall. Then let us be renowned while
 “ we may; and leave our fame behind us, like the last
 “ beams of the sun, when he hides his red head in
 “ the west†.”

In Homer's time, heroes were greedy of plunder; and, like robbers, were much disposed to insult a vanquished foe. According to Ossian, the ancient Caledonians had no idea of plunder: and, as they fought for fame only, their humanity overflowed to the vanquished. American savages, it is true, are not addicted to plunder, and are ready to bestow on the first comer what trifles they force from the enemy. But they have no notion of a pitched battle, nor of single combat: on the contrary, they value themselves upon slaughtering their enemies by surprise, without risking their own sweet persons. Agreeable to the magnanimous character given by Ossian of his countrymen, we find humanity blended with courage in all their actions: “ Fingal pitied the white-armed maid: he stayed the
 “ uplifted sword. The tear was in the eye of the
 “ king, as bending forward he spoke: king of streamy
 “ Sora,

* Carthlon.

† Temora.

“ Sora, fear not the sword of Fingal : it was never
 “ stained with the blood of the vanquished ; it never
 “ pierced a fallen foe. Let thy people rejoice along
 “ the blue waters of Tora : let the maids of thy love
 “ be glad. Why should’st thou fall in thy youth,
 “ king of streamy Sora*.”

Fingal speaks : “ Son of my strength, he said, take
 “ the spear of Fingal : go to Teutha’s mighty stream,
 “ and save the car-borne Colmar. Let thy fame re-
 “ turn before thee like a pleasant gale ; that my soul
 “ may rejoice over my son, who renews the renown
 “ of our fathers. Ossian ! be thou a storm in battle,
 “ but mild where the foes are low. It was thus my
 “ fame arose, O my son ; and be thou like Selma’s
 “ chief. When the haughty come to my hall, my
 “ eyes behold them not, but my arm is stretched
 “ forth to the unhappy, my sword defends the weak †”
 “ O Oscar ! bend the strong in arm, but spare the
 “ feeble hand. Be thou a stream of many tides
 “ against the foes of thy people, but like the gale
 “ that moves the grass to those who ask thy aid. Ne-
 “ ver search for the battle, nor shun it when it comes.
 “ So Trenmor lived ; such Trathal was ; and such
 “ has Fingal been. My arm was the support of the
 “ injured ; and the weak rested behind the lightning
 “ of my steel ‡.”

Humanity to the vanquished is displayed in the
 following passages. After defeating in battle Swaran
 king of Lochlin, Fingal says, “ Raise, Ullin, raise
 “ the song of peace, and soothe my soul after battle,
 “ that my ear may forget the noise of arms. And
 “ let a hundred harps be near to gladden the king of
 “ Lochlin : he must depart from us with joy : none
 “ ever went sad from Fingal. Oscar, the lightning
 “ of my sword is against the strong ; but peace-

C c 2

“ ful

* Carric-thura.

† Calthon and Comal.

‡ Fingal, book 3.

“ful it hangs by my side when warriors yield
 “in battle *.” “Uthal fell beneath my sword, and
 “the sons of Berathon fled. It was then I saw him
 “in his beauty, and the tear hung in my eye. Thou
 “art fallen, young tree, I said, with all thy bud-
 “ding beauties round thee. The winds come
 “from the desert, and there is no sound in thy leaves.
 “Lovely art thou in death, son of car-borne Lath-
 “mor †.”

After perusing these quotations, it will not be thought that Ossian deviates from the manners represented by him, in describing the hospitality of his chieftains; “We heard the voice of joy on the coast, and we thought that the mighty Cathmor came; Cathmor, the friend of strangers, the brother of red-hair’d Cairbar. But their souls were not the same; for the light of heaven was in the bosom of Cathmor. His towers rose on the banks of Atha: seven paths led to his hall: seven chiefs stood on these paths, and called the stranger to the feast. But Cathmor dwelt in the wood to avoid the voice of praise ‡.” Rathmor was a chief of Clutha. The feeble dwelt in his hall. The gates of Rathmor were never closed: his feast was always spread. The sons of the stranger came and blessed the generous chief of Clutha. Bards raised the song, and touched the harp: joy brightened on the face of the mournful. Duntharmo came in his pride, and rushed into combat with Rathmor. The chief of Clutha overcame. The rage of Duntharmo rose: he came by night with his warriors; and the mighty Rathmor fell: he fell in his hall, where his feast had been often spread for strangers ||.”

It seems not to exceed the magnanimity of his chieftains, intent upon glory only, to feast even an enemy

* Fingal, book 6. † Berathon. ‡ Temora.

|| Calthon and Colmal.

my before a battle. Cuchullin, after the first day's engagement with Swaran, king of Lochlin or Scandinavia, says to Carril, one of his bards, "Is this feast spread for me alone, and the king of Lochlin on Ullin's shore; far from the deer of his hills, and founding halls of his feasts? Rise, Carril of other times, and carry my words to Swaran; tell him from the roaring of waters, that Cuchullin gives his feast. Here let him listen to the sound of my groves amid the clouds of night: for cold and bleak the blustering winds rush over the foam of his seas. Here let him praise the trembling harp, and hear the songs of heroes *."

The Scandinavian king, less polished, refused the invitation. Cairbar speaks: "Spread the feast on Lena, and let my hundred bards attend. And thou red-hair'd Olla, take the harp of the king. Go to Oskar, king of swords, and bid him to our feast. To day we feast and hear the song; to-morrow break the spears†." "Olla came with his songs. Oskar went to Cairbar's feast. Three hundred heroes attend the chief, and the clang of their arms is terrible. The gray dogs bound on the heath, and their howling is frequent. Fingal saw the departure of the hero: the soul of the king was sad. He dreads the gloomy Cairbar: but who of the race of Trenmor fears the foe?‡"

Cruelty is every where condemned as an infamous vice. Speaking of the bards, "Cairbar feared to stretch his sword to the bards, though his soul was dark; but he closed us in the midst of darkness. Three days we pined alone: on the fourth the noble Cathmor came. He heard our voice from the cave, and turned the eye of his wrath on Cairbar. Chief of Atha, he said, how long wilt thou pain my soul? Thy heart is like the rock of the desert,

C c 3

"and

* Fingal, book 1.

† Temora.

‡ Temora.

“ and thy thoughts are dark. But thou art the bro-
 “ ther of Cathmor, and he will fill fight thy battles.
 “ Cathmor’s soul is not like thine, thou feeble hand of
 “ war. The light of my bosom is stained with thy
 “ deeds. The bards will not sing of my renown :
 “ they may say, Cathmor was brave, but he fought
 “ for gloomy Cairbar : they will pass over my tomb
 “ in silence, and my fame shall not be heard. Cair-
 “ bar, loose the bards ; they are the sons of other
 “ times : their voice shall be heard in other ages when
 “ the kings of Temora have failed*.” Ullin raised
 “ his white sails : the wind of the south came forth.
 “ He bounded on the waves towards Selma’s walls.
 “ The feast is spread on Lena : an hundred heroes
 “ reared the tomb of Cairbar ; but no song is raised
 “ over the chief, for his soul had been dark and
 “ bloody. We remembered the fall of Cormac ; and
 “ what could we say in Cairbar’s praise† ?.”

Genuine manners never were represented more to
 the life by a Tacitus nor a Shakespeare. Such paint-
 ing is above the reach of pure invention : it must be
 the work of knowledge and feeling.

One may discover the manners of a nation from
 the figure their women make. Among savages, wo-
 men are treated like slaves ; and they acquire not the
 dignity that belongs to the sex, till manners be con-
 siderably be refined. According to the manners a-
 bove described, women ought to have made a con-
 siderable figure among the ancient Caledonians. Let
 us examine Ossian upon that subject, in order to
 judge whether he carries on the same tone of man-
 ners through every particular. That women were
 highly regarded, appears from the following passages :
 “ Daughter of the hand of snow ! I was not so
 “ mournful and blind, I was not so dark and for-
 “ lorn, when Everallin loved me, Everallin with the
 “ dark-brown

* Temora.

† Temora.

“ dark-brown hair, the white-bosomed love of Cor-
 “ mac. A thousand heroes fought the maid, she de-
 “ nied her love to a thousand: the sons of the sword
 “ were despised; for graceful in her eyes was Ossian.
 “ I went in suit of the maid to Lego’s sable surge;
 “ twelve of my people were there, sons of the streamy
 “ Morven. We came to Branno friend of strangers,
 “ Branno of the sounding mail.—From whence, he
 “ said, are the arms of steel? Not easy to win is the
 “ maid that has denied the blue-eyed sons of Erin.
 “ But blest be thou, O son of Fingal, happy is the
 “ maid that waits thee. Though twelve daughters
 “ of beauty were mine, thine were the choice, thou
 “ son of fame! Then he opened the hall of the maid,
 “ the dark-haired Everallin. Joy kindled in our
 “ breasts of steel, and blest the maid of Branno*.”
 “ Now Connal, on Cromla’s side, spoke to the chief
 “ of the noble car. Why that gloom, son of Semo?
 “ Our friends are the mighty in battle. And re-
 “ nowned art thou, O warrior! many were the deaths,
 “ of thy steel. Often has Bragela met thee, with
 “ blue-rolling eyes of joy; often has she met her he-
 “ ro returning in the midst of the valiant, when his
 “ sword was red with slaughter, and his foes silent in
 “ the field of the tomb. Pleasant to her ears were
 “ thy bards, when thine actions rose in the song†”
 “ But, king of Morven, if I shall fall, as one time
 “ the warrior must fall, raise my tomb in the midst,
 “ and let it be the greatest on Lena. And send over
 “ the dark-blue wave the sword of Orla, to the spouse
 “ of his love; that she may show it to her son, with
 “ tears to kindle his soul to war.” “ I lifted my
 “ eyes to Cromla, and I saw the son of generous Se-
 “ mo. Sad and slow he retired from his hill toward
 “ the lonely cave of Tura. He saw Fingal victori-
 “ ous, and mixed his joy with grief. The sun is
 “ bright

* Fingal, book 4.

† Fingal, book 5.

" bright on his armour, and Connal slowly followed.
 " They sunk behind the hill, like two pillars of the
 " fire of night, when winds pursue them over the
 " mountain, and the flaming heath resounds. Be-
 " side a stream of roaring foam, his cave is in a rock.
 " One tree bends above it; and the rushing winds
 " echo against its sides. There rests the chief of
 " Dunscath, the son of generous Semo. His thoughts
 " are on the battles he lost; and the tear is on his
 " cheek. He mourned the departure of his fame,
 " that fled like the mist of Cona. O Bragela, thou
 " art too far remote to cheer the soul of the hero.
 " But let him see thy bright form in his soul; that
 " his thoughts may return to the lovely sun-beam of
 " Dunscath*." " Ossian, king of swords, replied
 " the bard, thou best raisest the song. Long hast
 " thou been known to Carril, thou ruler of battles.
 " Often have I touched the harp to lovely Everallin.
 " Thou, too, hast often accompanied my voice in
 " Branno's hall of shells. And often amidst our
 " voices was heard the mildest Everallin. One day
 " she sung of Cormac's fall. The youth that died
 " for her love. I saw the tears on her cheek, and on
 " thine, thou chief of men. Her soul was touched
 " for the unhappy, though she loved him not. How
 " fair among a thousand maids, was the daughter of
 " the generous Branno†." It was in the days of
 " peace, replied the great Clessamor, I came in my
 " bounding ship to Balclutha's walls of towers. The
 " winds had roared behind my sails, and Clutha's
 " streams received my dark-bosomed vessel. Three
 " days I remained in Reuthamir's halls, and saw that
 " beam of light, his daughter. The joy of the shell
 " went round, and the aged hero gave the fair. Her
 " breasts were like the foam on the wave, and her
 " eyes like stars of light: her hair was dark as the
 " raven's

* Fingal, book 5.

† Ibid.

“ raven’s wing: her soul was generous and mild. My
 “ love for Moina was great; and my heart poured
 “ forth in joy *.” “ The fame of Ossian shall rise:
 “ his deeds shall be like his father’s. Let us rush in
 “ our arms, son of Morni, let us rush to battle.—
 “ Gaul, if thou shalt return, go to Selma’s lofty hall.
 “ Tell Everallin that I fell with fame: carry the
 “ sword to Branno’s daughter: let her give it to
 “ Oscar, when the years of his youth shall arise †.”

Next to war, love makes the principal figure: and well it may; for, in Ossian’s poems, it breathes every thing sweet, tender, and elevated. “ On Lubar’s
 “ grassy banks they fought; and Grudar fell. Fierce
 “ Cairbar came to the vale of the echoing Tura,
 “ where Brassolis, fairest of his sisters, all alone raised
 “ the song of grief. She sung the actions of Grudar,
 “ the youth of her secret soul: she mourned him in
 “ the field of blood; but still she hoped his return.
 “ Her white bosom is seen from her robe, as the
 “ moon from the clouds of night: her voice was
 “ softer than the harp, to raise the song of grief: her
 “ soul was fixed on Grudar, the secret look of her
 “ eye was his; when wilt thou come in thine arms,
 “ thou mighty in the war? Take Brassolis, Cairbar
 “ said, take this shield of blood: fix it on high with-
 “ in my hall, the armour of my foe. Her soft heart
 “ beat against her side: distracted, pale, she flew, and
 “ found her youth in his blood. She died on Crom-
 “ la’s heath. Here rests their dust, Cuchullin; and
 “ these two lonely yews, sprung from their tombs,
 “ wish to meet on high. Fair was Brassolis on the
 “ plain, and Grudar on the hill. The bard shall
 “ preserve their names, and repeat them to future
 “ times ‡.” “ Pleasant is thy voice, O Carril, said the
 “ blue-eyed chief of Erin; and lovely are the words
 “ of other times: they are like the calm shower of
 “ spring.”

* Carthon.

† Lathmon.

‡ Fingal, book 1.

“spring, when the sun looks on the field, and the light
 “cloud flies over the hill. O strike the harp in praise of
 “my love, the lonely sun-beam of Dunscaich: strike
 “the harp in praise of Bragela, whom I left in the isle
 “of mist, the spouse of Semo’s son. Dost thou raise
 “thy fair face from the rock to find the sails of Cu-
 “chullin? the sea is rolling far distant, and its white
 “foam will deceive thee for my sails. Retire, my
 “love, for it is night, and the dark winds sigh in thy
 “hair: retire to the hall of my feasts, and think of
 “times that are past; for I will not return till the
 “storm of war cease. O Connal, speak of war and
 “arms and send her from my mind; for lovely
 “with her raven hair is the white-bosomed daughter
 “of Sorglan*.”

Malvina speaks: “But thou dwellest in the soul
 “of Malvina, son of mighty Ossian. My sighs arise
 “with the beam of the east, my tears descend with
 “the drops of the night. I was a lovely tree in thy
 “presence, Oscar, with all my branches round me:
 “but thy death came like a blast from the desert, and
 “laid my green head low: the spring returned with
 “its showers, but of me not a leaf sprung. The
 “virgins saw me silent in the hall, and they touch-
 “ed the harp of joy. The tear was on the cheek
 “of Malvina, and the virgins beheld my grief.—
 “Why art thou sad, they said, thou first of the
 “maids of Lutha? Was he lovely as the beam of
 “the morning, and stately in thy fight †?” “Fin-
 “gal came in his mildness, rejoicing in secret over the
 “actions of his son. Morni’s face brightened with
 “gladness, and his aged eyes looked faintly through
 “tears of joy. We came to the halls of Selma, and
 “sat round the feast of shells. The maids of the
 “song came into our presence, and the mildly-blush-
 “ing Everallin. Her dark hair spreads on her neck
 “of snow, her eye rolls in secret on Ossian. She
 “touches

* Fingal, book 1.

† Cromach.

“ touches the harp of music, and we bless the daughter of Branno *.”

Had the Caledonians made slaves of their women, and thought as meanly of them as savages commonly do, Ossian could never have thought, even in a dream, of bestowing on them those numberless graces that exalt the female sex, and render many of them objects of pure and elevated affection. I say more: Supposing a savage to have been divinely inspired, manners so inconsistent with their own would not have been relished, nor even comprehended by his countrymen. And yet that they were highly relished is certain, having been diffused among all ranks, and preserved for many ages by memory alone, without writing. Here the argument mentioned above strikes with double force, to evince that the manners of the Caledonians must have been really such as Ossian describes.

Catharina Alexowna, Empress of Russia, promoted assemblies of men and women, as a means to polish the manners of her subjects. And in order to preserve decency in such assemblies, she published a body of regulations, of which the following is a specimen. “ Ladies who play at forfeitures, questions, and commands, &c. shall not be noisy nor riotous. No gentleman must attempt to force a kiss, nor strike a woman in the assembly, under pain of exclusion. Ladies are not to get drunk upon any pretence whatever; nor gentlemen before nine.” Compare the manners that required such regulations with those described above. Can we suppose, that the ladies and gentlemen of Ossian’s poems ever amused themselves, after the age of twelve, with hide and seek, questions and commands, or such childish play. Can it enter into our thoughts, that Bragela or Malvina were so often drunk, as to require the reprimand

reprimand of a public regulation; or that any hero of Ossian ever struck a woman of fashion in ire?

The immortality of the soul was a capital article in the Celtic creed, inculcated by the Druids *. And in Valerius Maximus, we find the following passage: "It is reported that the Gauls frequently lent money to be paid back in the infernal regions, from a firm persuasion that the souls of men were immortal. I would have called them fools, if those wearers of breeches had not thought the same as Pythagoras who wore a cloak †." All savages have an impression of immortality; but few even of the most enlightened, before Christianity prevailed, had the least notion of any occupations in another life, but what they were accustomed to in this. Even Virgil, in his poetical fervency, finds no amusements for his departed heroes, but what they were fond of when alive; the same love for war, the same taste for hunting, and the same affection to their friends. As we have no reason to expect more invention in Ossian, the observation may serve as a key to the ghosts introduced by him, and to his whole machinery, as termed by critics. His description of these ghosts is copied plainly from the creed of his country.

If the above manners be genuine, they are a singular phenomenon in the History of Man: if they be the invention of an illiterate bard, among savages utterly ignorant of such manners, the phenomenon is no less singular. Let either side be taken, and a sort of miracle must be admitted. In the instances above given, such a beautiful mixture there is of simplicity

* Pomponius Mela. Ammianus Marcellinus.

† "Gallos, memoriæ proditum est pecunias mutuas, quæ sibi apud inferos redderentur, dare: quia persuasum habuerint, animas hominum immortales esse. Dicerem stultos, nisi idem braccati sensissent quod palliatus Pythagoras sensit."

simplicity and dignity, and so much life given to the manners described, that real manners were never represented with a more striking appearance of truth. If these manners be fictitious, I say again, that the author must have been inspired: they plainly exceed the invention of a savage; nay, they exceed the invention of any known writer. Every man will judge for himself: it is perhaps fondness for such refined manners, that makes me inclined to reality against fiction.

I am aware, at the same time, that manners so pure and elevated, in the first stage of society, are difficult to be accounted for. The Caledonians were not an original tribe, who may be supposed to have had manners peculiar to themselves: they were a branch of the Celtæ, and had a language common to them with the inhabitants of Gaul, and of England. The manners probably of all were the same, or nearly so; and if we expect any light for explaining Caledonian manners, it must be from that quarter: we have indeed no other resource. Diodorus Siculus reports of the Celtæ, that, though warlike, they were upright in their dealings, and far removed from deceit and duplicity. "The Gauls are of an open temper, not at all insidious; and in fight they rely on valour, not on stratagem *." And though cruel to their enemies, yet Pomponious Mela observes, that they were kind and compassionate to the suppliant and unfortunate. Strabo describes the Gauls as studious of war, and of great alacrity in fighting; otherwise an innocent people, altogether void of malignity. He says that they had three orders of men, bards, priests, and druids; that the province of the bards was to study poetry, and to compose songs in praise of their deceased heroes; that the priests presided over divine worship; and that the druids, beside studying moral

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and

* Cæsar de Bel. Africo.

and natural philosophy, determined all controversies, and had some direction even in war. Cæsar, less attentive to civil matters, comprehends these three orders under the name of *druids*; and observes, that the druids teach their disciples a vast number of verses, which they must get by heart. Diodorus Siculus says, that the Gauls had poets termed *bards*, who sung airs accompanied with the harp, in praise of some, and dispraise of others. Lucan, speaking of the three orders, says,

“ Vos quoque, qui fortes animas, belloque peremptas,
 “ Laudibus in Longum, vates dimittitis ævum,
 “ Plurima securi fudistis carmina bardi.”

“ You too, ye bards! whom sacred raptures fire,
 “ To chant your heroes to your country’s lyre;
 “ Who consecrate in your immortal strain,
 “ Brave patriot souls, in righteous battle slain;
 “ Securely now the tuneful task renew,
 “ And noblest themes in deathless songs pursue.”

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With respect to the Celtic women in particular, it is agreed by all writers, that they were extremely beautiful*; and no less remarkable for spirit than for beauty. If we can rely on Diodorus Siculus, the women in Gaul equalled the men in courage. Tacitus, in his life of Agricola, says, that the British women frequently joined with the men, when attacked by an enemy. And so much were they regarded, as to be thought capable of the highest command. “ They made no distinction of sex in conferring authority,” says the same author. And accordingly, during the war carried on by Caractacus, a gallant British king, against the Romans, Cartimandua was queen of the Brigantes. Boadicea is recorded in Ro-

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* Diodorus Siculus, lib. 5. Athenæus, lib. 13.

man annals as a queen of a warlike spirit. She led on a great army against the Romans; and in exhorting her people to behave with courage, she observed, that it was not unusual to see a British army led on to battle by a woman; to which Tacitus adds his testimony: "The Britons even followed women as leaders in the field*." No wonder that Celtic women, so amply provided with spirit, as well as beauty, made a capital figure in every public entertainment†."

The Galic Celtæ undoubtedly carried with them their manners and customs to Britain, and spread them gradually from south to north.—These bards, who were in high estimation, became great proficient in poetry; of which we have a conspicuous instance in the works of Ossian. Their capital compositions were diligently studied by those of their own order, and admired by all. The songs of the bards accompanied with the harp, made a deep impression on the young warrior, elevated some into heroes, and promoted virtue in every hearer. Another circumstance common to the Caledonians with every other nation in the first stage of society, concurred to form their manners; which is, that avarice was unknown among them. People in that stage, ignorant of habitual wants, and having a ready supply of all that nature requires, have little notion of property, and not the slightest desire of accumulating the goods of fortune; and for that reason are always found honest and disinterested. With respect to the female sex, who make an illustrious figure in Ossian's poems, if they were so eminent both for courage and beauty as they are represented by the best authors, it is no wonder to find them painted by Ossian as objects of love the most pure and refined. Nor ought it to be overlooked, that the soft and delicate notes of the harp

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have

* Vita Agricolæ, cap. 16. † Annalium, lib. 14.

‡ Athenæus, lib. 10.

have a tendency to purify manners, and to refine love.

Whether the causes here assigned of Celtic manners be fully adequate may well admit of a doubt; but if authentic history be relied on, we can entertain no doubt, that the manners of the Galic and British Celtæ, including the Caledonians, were such as are above described. And as the manners ascribed by Ossian to his countrymen the Caledonians, are in every particular conformable to those now mentioned, it clearly follows, that Ossian was no inventor, but drew his pictures of manners from real life. This is made highly probable from intrinsic evidence, the same that is so copiously urged above; and now by authentic history, that probability is so much heightened, as scarce to leave room for a doubt.

Our present Highlanders are but a small part of the inhabitants of Britain; and they have been sinking in their importance, from the time that arts and sciences made a figure, and peaceable manners prevailed. And yet in that people are discernible many remaining features of their forefathers the Caledonians. They have to this day a disposition to war, and when disciplined make excellent soldiers, sober, active, and obedient. They are eminently hospitable; and the character given by Strabo of the Galic Celtæ, that they were innocent and devoid of malignity, is to them perfectly applicable. That they have not the magnanimity and heroism of the Caledonians, is easily accounted for. The Caledonians were a free and independent people, unawed by any superior power, and living under the mild government of their own chieftains; compared with their forefathers, the present Highlanders make a very inconsiderable figure: their country is barren, and at any rate is but a small part of a potent kingdom; and their language deprives them of intercourse with their polished neighbours.

There

There certainly never happened in literature, a discovery more extraordinary than the works of Ossian. To lay the scene of action among hunters in the first stage of society, and to bestow upon such a people a system of manners that would do honour to the most polished state, seemed at first an ill-contrived forgery. But if a forgery, why so bold and improbable? why not invent manners more congruous to the savage state? And as at any rate the work has great merit, why did the author conceal himself?

All the inhabitants of Britain were of Celtic extraction; and there is reason to believe, that the manners of Caledonia were the manners of every part of the island, before the inhabitants of the plains were enslaved by the Romans. The only circumstance peculiar to the Caledonians, is their mountainous situation: being less exposed to the oppression of foreigners, and farther removed from commerce, they did longer than their southern neighbours preserve their manners pure and untainted.

I have all along considered the poems of Ossian in a historical view merely. In the view of criticism they have been examined by a writer of distinguished taste*; and however bold to enter a field where he hath repeated laurels, I imagine that there still remain some trifles for me to glean. Two of these poems, Fingal and Temora, are regular epic poems; and perhaps the single instances of epic poetry moulded into the form of an opera. We have in these two poems both the *Recitativo* and *Aria* of an Italian opera; dropped indeed in the translation, from difficulty of imitation. Ossian's poems were all of them composed with a view to music; though in the long poems mentioned, it is probable that the airs only were accompanied with the harp, the recitative being left to
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* Doctor Blair, Professor of Rhetoric in the College of Edinburgh.

the voice. The poems of Ossian are singular in another respect, being probably the only regular work now remaining that was composed in the hunter-state. Some songs of that early period may possibly have escaped oblivion; but no other poem of the epic kind. One may advance a step farther, and pronounce, with a high degree of probability, that Fingal and Temora are the only epic poems that ever were composed in that state. How great must have been the talents of the author, beset with every obstruction to genius, the manners of his country alone excepted; a cold inhospitable climate; the face of the country so deformed as scarce to afford a pleasing object; and he himself absolutely illiterate! One may venture boldly to affirm, that such a poem as Fingal or Temora never was composed in any other part of the world, under such disadvantageous circumstances.

F I N I S.





